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Poems from the Works of Aubrey de Vere

POEMS
FROM THE WORKS OF
AUBREY DE VERE

Selected and Edited by
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CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

It has been noticed with surprise that the poems of the most spiritual of our intellectual poets (for thus Sir Henry Taylor has designated Aubrey de Vere) are less familiar to Catholics than to many others on whose sympathies he would seem to have a lesser claim. But the publication of Mr de Vere's Life and Letters by Mr Wilfrid Ward gives fitting opportunity for the removal of this reproach, while the Catholic Truth Society offers a sure medium for bringing these poems within the reach of that section of the reading public whose approval the author valued beyond any other.

Should the sale of this volume suffice to cover the expenses of its publication, the Editor hopes to be allowed to bring out some other of the more important of Aubrey de Vere's works in similar form.

M. F. D.

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MEMOIR

AUBREY, third son of Sir Aubrey and Lady de Vere, was born in January, 1814, at Curragh Chase, in the county of Limerick, where his happy boyhood was passed. To have been brought up amid scenes of great natural beauty is, to those whose minds are attuned to appreciate it, a very high privilege; many passages in Mr de Vere's writings show how even in the careless years of youth he had already learned to watch nature in her varying moods with that reverent and sympathetic wonder to which his verse so often gives expression.

Whether from too great a love of outdoor life, or from a somewhat dreamy temperament, Aubrey was no precocious scholar. Latin came to him, if not with tears, at least only after many reproofs. However, discipline and his own resolute will did much, for in his sixteenth year he writes exultingly to a friend that his version of the *Antigone* has been so highly praised by a distinguished Grecian that he now means to translate all the plays of Sophocles.

Still, his temper was rather that of a student than of a scholar. During his stay

at Trinity College, Dublin, he made it his object to bring greater knowledge and wider reading to bear on the subjects which interested him rather than to win academic honours. He formed many friendships at college: of these the closest was with the brilliant mathematician afterwards known as Sir William Hamilton, who, though many years his senior, recognizing the gifted nature of his boy companion, treated him as an intellectual equal, discussing with him the most abstruse questions of history, theology or metaphysics.

His college days ended, Aubrey de Vere returned to Curragh, where he helped his father in the various duties and occupations which make up an active landowner's life, but always reserved a good deal of time for writing and study, as was the custom of the house. For in the family of the de Veres literary talent was an inheritance; Sir Aubrey had written two fine dramas, "Julian the Apostate," and "Mary Tudor," while the translations from Horace of Stephen de Vere, Aubrey's elder brother, still rank among the best. Aubrey also went a good deal into society, both in Ireland and England, the charm of his character and conversation, and perhaps the wistful Irish humour always peculiarly his, gaining him many friends. He speedily

MEMOIR

became intimate with Tennyson and Taylor, with Carlyle, Rossetti and Patmore, while his enthusiastic admiration for Wordsworth won him the fatherly affection of the older bard, whose praise encouraged him to the serious study of the art of poetry. But it was not until 1842 that his first published volume appeared, which, if it did not take the town by storm, earned the more valuable appreciation of his brethren of the craft. After reading the "Search for Proserpine," Landor exclaimed: "The most envious of poets or half poets could not envy me as I envy Aubrey de Vere!" This poem, which gives its name to the volume, admirable in its classic simplicity and grace is, however, too long for production here. The "Ode to a Daffodil" illustrates excellently the lightness of the poet's touch and his glad recognition of the spiritual significance of outward things. Like his father, whose sonnets Wordsworth described as "among the most perfect of our age," Aubrey de Vere has left some which will always be counted among the poetic treasures of the English tongue. Of these "Sorrow," "The Sungod," and "Human Life" are the most popular.

Although talent is perhaps best cultivated in meditative seclusion, some contact with the realities of life is needed for the de-

velopment of character, and to Aubrey de Vere this discipline came in its sternest form. In July, 1846, Curragh Chase lost its loved and honoured master; and but few months had passed when those who mourned Sir Aubrey's loss most deeply had reason to rejoice that he at least had been spared the anguish which the years that followed brought with them.

Seldom have the horror and magnitude of the awful calamity known as the "Great Famine," when the food of a whole nation perished before their eyes—the causes which led up to it, the means used to combat it, their inadequacy and their failure—been more clearly and fully set forth than in Aubrey de Vere's writings; while of the helpless and hopeless suffering, the mob terrorism, the incidents of exquisite pathos, the light-hearted patience and heroism—even the flashes of mother-wit which now and again lightened the blackness of the tragedy—his correspondence gives vivid glimpses.

In the arduous work of relief and salvage the de Veres took an active part. "Aubrey, the visionary, the dreamer," writes a neighbour, "has been through strange vicissitudes and become an active man of business and most efficacious popular orator. He dispersed a mob of several thousands who, after pointing their guns repeatedly at him, ended

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by professing the deepest respect for him and his family. On this and many other occasions his imperturbable good humour and self-possession have proved more efficacious than any display of force." Meanwhile his elder brother, now Sir Stephen de Vere, by an heroic act of self-sacrifice was the means of saving thousands of lives. Hearing of the cruel sufferings of the emigrants from the overcrowding of the Atlantic steamers, he embarked in an emigrant ship, sharing the horrors of a passage so terrible in its results that most of his shipmates fell victims to the fever. After staying with them till the survivors were restored to health, Stephen de Vere returned to England, and drew up an accurate report based on his personal experience, which was laid before Parliament, and thus the evil was remedied.

It was by contact with such tragic and thrilling events that the poet's elect and serious spirit passed from early to riper manhood and gave proof of its temper, so that although his life's work lay for the most part in regions of meditative peace, he yet has left us lessons of how men should bear themselves in seasons of stress.

In November, 1851, Mr de Vere made his submission to the Catholic Church. There are few of whom it can be more truly said, "his was a spirit naturally Catholic."

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Though he has told us that attachment to the Anglican Church has been from boyhood his strongest passion, yet even in his undergraduate days he had revered both the historic grandeur of the Church Catholic and the faith and piety of his humbler neighbours. Still he disliked controversy, and though a deeply-interested observer of the Tractarian movement, he kept aloof from it; nor was it until the acceptance by the Church of England of the Gorham decision as to baptism that the claims of the Catholic Church on his allegiance first came home to him.

But although Aubrey de Vere lingered somewhat long on the Church's threshold, once her portals passed, she has had no more loyal and devoted disciple. Entering, not as a stranger but as a son, into the treasury of the great Housemistress, he found in the multitude of thoughts, of aspirations, in the stores of mystical analysis, of legendary lore, which the Church offers to poetic and religious temperaments, fresh stimulus to literary productiveness; while, always interested in the problems and questions of the day, he now studied them with keener zest. During a long series of years he was a constant contributor to the *Quarterly* and other leading reviews; his articles, written with thorough knowledge of his subject and with

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conscientious accuracy, did much to make Catholic ideals and aims familiar to his readers.

However, Aubrey de Vere was before all a poet, and it is by his poetry, especially those poems which treat of Irish and of religious subjects, that he would himself prefer to be judged. In 1855 were published the "May Carols," written in obedience to a wish expressed to Mr de Vere by Pius IX that he should choose some purely religious subject for his verse. In his preface the author explains that the Carols are not merely a collection of verses in honour of Our Lady, but were composed mainly with the intention of illustrating the central doctrine of Christianity—the Incarnation—from a special point of view, which may be best described as the "Theology of Mary." Further, he had the secondary purpose of contrasting the way in which nature might be interpreted through the Christian religion, which confesses God made man, in opposition with the pagan view, which regarded nature herself as divine; while the selection of the month dedicated from the earliest ages to the Mother Maid gives gladness to the theme. From this volume a selection of thirty-one poems has been made, in the hope that they may be used for private devotion during the month of Mary: for the

"May Carols" have justly been praised as much for their theological depth and accuracy as for their tender poetic strain.

"Inisfail" illustrates the annals of Ireland, from the ages preceding the Norman conquest to our own time, in poems of great spirit and beauty; many of them will be found in the present volume. Already is indicated the sublime conception of Ireland as a sacrificial nation, whose lot it is to show forth spiritual virtues under perpetual earthly misfortune, to which the poet in his later verse so frequently recurs.

In the "Legends of Ireland's Heroic Age," where the scene lies in pre-Christian times, whatever of goodness or of beauty may be traced in those far-away days is garnered. We see Cuchullin, the noblest figure in Irish verse, as he rides home from battle in his war-car, calling his horses by their names; the lovers, Naisi and Deirdre, going hand in hand, self-forgetful, to their doom. The beautiful legend of the "Children of Lir" tells of the first effort made in any Christian literature to extend the bounds of divine mercy back a thousand years, so as to gather in those whose lives a pagan curse had blighted into the Christian fold; while in the "Legends of St Patrick" all the various events, authentic and unauthentic, in the life of the Apostle

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of Ireland, are woven into a beautiful poem. Of these "Legends" only a few lines, taken from "The Striving of St Patrick on Mount Cruachan," are given here, as the whole poem has been already published by Messrs Cassell in popular form.

The "Records of the Church and Empire" and the "Legends of the Saxon Saints" show forth the wondrous and abundant vitality which enabled the Church to convert the heathen nations. And so the poems succeed one another, taking us through mediæval times with St Thomas of Canterbury, with Blessed Joan of Arc, with the Cid Campeodar, till in St Peter's Chains the poet's love and devotion to the Apostolic See finds its highest and ultimate expression.

Of Aubrey de Vere's life it might well be said that "in it thoughts stood for events," so serene and smooth was its course. Though he never was actually the owner of Curragh Chase, his home was always there; free from domestic cares, he enjoyed, as he used playfully to say, all the pleasures of domestic life without its troubles.

In the stately library, which was his by prescription, he sat among his books, reading, writing and studying, through the long Irish winters and springs, ever accessible and kindly, the best of neighbours and most delightful of conversationalists with poor and

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rich alike. As the years passed on, the seasons he allotted to travel and to society grew fewer and shorter; still he was always anxious to keep in touch with the friends remaining to him of the many he had loved; ready even to extend the borders of his acquaintance in different directions, and eager to recognize and welcome a new genius.

He kept to the last many of the characteristics of youth, the unclouded brow and clear complexion of health, with hopes undimmed and the ideals he so faithfully clung to still cherished, often repeating to himself and to others the poems that had dwelt in his mind for half a century; till the sunset light grew dimmer, and in January, 1902, he passed peacefully away, and was buried among his own people in the quiet graveyard of Askeaton Abbey.

M. F. DOMVILLE.

Early Poems

ODE TO THE DAFFODIL

I

O LOVE-STAR of the unbelovèd March,
When, cold and shrill,
Forth flows beneath a low, dim-lighted arch
The wind that beats sharp crag and barren
hill,
And keeps unfilmed the lately torpid rill !

II

A week or e'er
Thou com'st, thy soul is round us everywhere,
And many an auspice, many an omen,
Whispers, scarce noted, thou art coming :
Huge, cloudlike trees grow dense with sprays
and buds
And cast a shapelier gloom o'er freshening
grass ;
And through the fringe of ragged woods
More shrouded sunbeams pass :
Fresh shoots conceal the pollard's spike
The driving rack out-braving ;
The hedge swells large by ditch and dike ;
And all the uncoloured world is like
A shadow-limned engraving.

I

EARLY POEMS

III

Herald and harbinger ! with thee
Begins the year's great jubilee !
Of her solemnities sublime
A sacristan, whose gusty taper
Flashes through earliest morning vapour,
Thou ring'st dark nocturns and dim prime.
Birds that have yet no heart for song
Gain strength-with thee to twitter ;
And, warm at last, where hollies throng
The mirrored sunbeams glitter.
With silk the osier plumes her tendrils thin :
Sweet blasts, though keen as sweet, the
blue lake wrinkle :
And buds on leafless boughs begin
Against grey skies to twinkle.

IV

To thee belongs
A pathos drowned in later scents and
songs !
Thou com'st when first the Spring
On Winter's verge encroaches ;
When gifts that speed on wounded wing
Meet little save reproaches !
Thou com'st when blossoms blighted
Retracted sweets, and ditty

ODE TO THE DAFFODIL

From suppliants oft deceived and spited
More anger draw than pity !
Thee the old shepherd on the bleak hill-side
Far distant eyeing leans upon his staff
Till from his cheek the wind-brushed tear is
dried.
In thee he spells his boyhood's epitaph.
To thee belongs the youngling of the flock
When first it lies, close-huddled from the
cold,
Between the sheltering rock
And gorse-bush slowly overcrept with gold.

V

Thou laugh'st, bold outcast bright as brave,
When the wood bellows and the cave,
And leagues inland is heard the wave !
Hating the dainty and the fine
As sings the blackbird thou dost shine !
Thou com'st while yet on mountain lawns
high up
Lurks the last snow, while by the berried
breer
As yet the black spring in its craggy cup
No music makes or charms no listening
ear.
Thou com'st while from the oak stock or red
beech
Dead Autumn scoffs young Spring with
splenetic speech ;

EARLY POEMS

When in her vidual chastity the Year
With frozen memories of the sacred past
Her doors and heart makes fast,
And loves no flower save those that deck
the bier :
Ere yet the blossomed sycamore
With golden surf is curdled o'er ;
Ere yet the birch against the blue
Her silken tissue weaves anew.
Thou com'st while, meteor-like 'mid fens, the
weed
Swims wan in light ; while sleet-showers
whitening glare ;
Weeks ere by river brims, new furred, the
reed
Leans its green javelin level in the air.
Child of the strong and strenuous East !
Now scattered wide o'er dusk hill bases,
Now massed in broad illuminate spaces ;
Torchbearer at a wedding feast
Whereof thou mayst not be partaker,
But mime, at most, and merrymaker ;
Phosphor of an ungrateful sun
That rises but to bid thy lamp begone :
Farewell ! I saw
Writ large on woods and lawns to-day that
Law
Which back remands thy race and thee
To hero-haunted shades of dark Perse-
phone.

ODE TO THE DAFFODIL

To-day the Spring has pledged her marriage
vow :

Her voice, late tremulous, strong has
grown and steady :

To-day the Spring is crowned a queen : but
thou

Thy winter hast already!

Take my song's blessing, and depart

Type of true service—unrequited heart.

EARLY POEMS

CHAUCER

ESCAPED from the city, its smoke and its
glare,
'Tis pleasant, showers over and birds in
chorus,
To sit in green valleys and breathe cool air
Which the violet only has breathed before
us !

Such healthful solace is ours, forsaking
The glass-growth of modern and modish
rhyme
For the music of days when the Muse was
breaking
On Chaucer's pleasaunce like dawn's sweet
prime.

Hands rubbed together smell still of earth !
The hot-bed verse has a hot-bed taint ;
'Tis sense turned sour, its cynical mirth ;
'Tis pride, its darkness ; its blush, 'tis
paint.

His song was a feast where thought and jest
Like monk and franklin alike found place ;
Good Will's Round Table ! There sat as
guest
Shakesperean insight with Spenser's grace.

CHAUCEUR

His England lay laughing in Faith's bright
morn !

Life in his eye looked as rosy and round
As the cheek of the huntsman that blows on
the horn

When the stag leaps up and loud bays the
hound.

King Edward's tourney, fair Blanche's court,
Their clarions, their lutes in his verse live
on ;

But he loved better the bird's consort
Under oaks of Woodstock while rose the
sun.

The cloister, the war-field tented and brave,
The shout of the burghers in hostel or hall,
The embassy grave o'er ocean's wave,
And Petrarch's converse—he loved them
all.

In Spring, when the breast of the lime-grove
gathers

Its roseate cloud ; when the flushed streams
sing,

And the mavis tricks her in gayer feathers,
Read Chaucer then ; for Chaucer is Spring !

On lonely evenings in dull Novembers,
When rills run choked under skies of lead,
And on forest-hearths the year's last embers,
Wind-heaped and glowing, lie, yellow and
red.

EARLY POEMS

Read Chaucer still ! In his ivied beaker
With knights and wood-gods and saints
embossed,
Spring hides her head till the wintry breaker
Thunders no more on the far-off coast.

SONG

THE FLOWER OF THE TREE

I

O THE flower of the tree is the flower for me,
That life out of life, high-hanging and free,
By the finger of God and the south wind's fan
Drawn from the broad bough, as Eve from
Man !

From the rank red earth it never upgrew :
It was woo'd from the bark in the glistening
blue.

II

Hail, blossoms green 'mid the lines unseen,
That charm the bees to your honeyed screen,
As like to the green trees that gave you birth
Astruetongue's kindness to true heart's worth !
We see you not ; but, we scarce know why,
We are glad when the air you have breathed
goes by.

III

O flowers of the lime ! 'twas a merry time
When under you first we read old rhyme,
And heard the wind roam over pale and park,
We, not I, 'mid the lime-grove dark ;
Summer is heavy and sad. Ye bring
With your tardy blossoms a second Spring.

THE GOLDEN MEAN

FORTUNE ! unloved of whom are those
On whom the virtues smile,
Forbear the land I love, and choose,
Choose still some meaner isle !
Thy best of gifts are gilded chains ;
The gold wears off ; the bond remains.

Thus much of good, nor more, is thine,
That, clustering round the wand
Thou lift'st, with honey smeared and wine,
In that unqueenly hand,
Close-limed are trapped those sun-bred flies
Which else had swarmed about the wise.

The vanities of fleeting time
To powers that fleet belong ;
They fear and hate the sons sublime
Of science and of song,
And those that, scorned as weak, o'errule
The strong, and keep the world at school.

For how could song her tenderer notes
Elaborate for the ear
Of one on vulgar noise who dotes ;
Of one through deserts drear
On-rushing in that race distraught
Whose goad is hate, whose goal is naught ?

THE GOLDEN MEAN

And how could science trust that line
Her labyrinth's sacred clue,
Of subtly-woven thought, more fine
Than threads of morning dew,
To those unhallowed hands and coarse
The drudges base of greed or force?

Faith to the sensual and the proud
Whom this world makes her prey
But glimmers with the light allowed
To tapers at noonday;
When garish joys have ta'en their flight
Like stars she glorifies the night.

Nor less the heroic life extracts
From circumstance adverse
Her food of sufferings and of acts,
While pain, a rugged nurse,
On the rough breast of wintry seas
Rocks it amid the lullabies.

Hail, poor Estate! Through thee man's race
Partake, by rule controlled,
The praise of them discalced who pace,
And them that kneel white-stoled;
Where thou hast honours due, hard by
Obedience stands and Chastity.

EARLY POEMS

Hail, too, O Bard,* nor poor nor rich,
Whom one blue gleam of sea
Binds to our British Cuma's beach ;
Our gold we store in thee ;
To thee not wealth but worlds belong,
Like Delos raised ; such might hath song

Through thee to him who climbs that down
Arched onward toward the west,
White cliff, green shore, and stubble brown
In Idyl grace are dressed ;
Below low doors, a later Ruth,
Thy Dora sits—serene as truth.

Thy song can girdle hill and mead
With choirs, more pure, more fair, [weed,
Their locks with wild flower dressed and
Than ever Hellas bare :
Theocritus, we cry, once more
Treads his beloved Trinacrian shore !

O long with freedom's gale refreshed,
With mild sea-murmurs lulled
O long by thee, in cares unmeshed,
Those healthier flowers be culled ;
Rich Egypt knew not, nor the wain
That creaked o'er deep Boeotian plain !

* Tennyson.

THE GOLDEN MEAN

They lit Arcadian peaks : they breathed—
Light soils have airs divine—
O'er Scio's rocks with ivy wreathed,
Stern Parnes' brow, and thine,
Pentelicus, whose marble womb
With temples crowned all-conquering Rome.

Teach us in all that round us lies
To see and feel each hour,
More than Homeric majesties,
And more than Phidian power :
Teach us the coasts of modern life
With lordlier tasks are daily rife,

Than theirs who plunged the heroic oar
Of old by Chersonese :
But bid our Argo launch from shore
Unbribed by golden fleece :
Bid us Dædalean arts to scorn
Which prostituted ends suborn !

That science—slave of sense—which claims
No commerce with the sky,
Is baser thrice than that which aims
With waxen wing to fly !
To grovel, or self-doomed to soar—
Mechanic age, be proud no more !

Religious Poems

MAY CAROLS

PROLOGUE

RELIGION, she that stands sublime
Upon the rock that crowns our globe,
Her foot on all the spoils of time,
With light eternal on her robe ;

She, sovereign of the orb she guides,
On truth's broad sun may root a gaze
That deepens, onward as she rides,
And shrinks not from the fontal blaze ;

But they—her daughter arts—must hide
Within the cleft, content to see
Dim skirts of glory waving wide,
And steps of parting deity.

'Tis theirs to watch the vision break
In gleams from nature's frown or smile,
The legend rise from out the lake,
The relic consecrate the isle.

MAY CAROLS

'Tis theirs to adumbrate and suggest ;
To point towards founts of buried lore ;
Leaving, in type alone expressed,
What man must know not, yet adore.

For where her court true wisdom keeps,
'Mid loftier handmaids, one there stands
Dark as the midnight's starry deeps,
A slave, gem-crowned, from Nubia's sands.

O thou whose light is in thy heart,
Reverence, love's mother ! without thee
Science may soar awhile ; but art
Drifts barren o'er a shoreless sea.

I

Who feels not, when the spring once more,
Stepping o'er winter's grave forlorn
With winged feet, retreads the shore
Of widowed earth, his bosom burn ?

As ordered flower succeeds to flower,
And May the ladder of her sweets
Ascends, advancing hour by hour
From step to step, what heart but beats ?

Some presence veiled, in fields and groves,
That mingles rapture with remorse ;
Some buried joy beside us moves,
And thrills the soul with such discourse

RELIGIOUS POEMS

As they, perchance, that wondering pair
Who to Emmaus bent their way,
Hearing, heard not. Like them our prayer
We make : "The night is near us. . . .
Stay !"

With paschal chants the churches ring ;
Their echoes strike along the tombs ;
The birds their hallelujahs sing ;
Each flower with nature's incense fumes.

Our long-lost Eden seems restored :
As on we move with tearful eyes
We feel through all the illumined sward
Some upward-working Paradise.

II

UPON Thy face, O God, Thy world
Looks ever up in love and awe ;
Thy stars, in circles onward hurled,
Sustain the steady yoke of law.

In alternating antiphons
Stream sings to stream and sea to sea ;
And moons that set and sinking suns
Obeisance make, O God, to Thee.

The swallow, winter's rage o'er blown,
Again, on warm spring breezes borne,
Revisiteth her haunts well-known ;
The lark is faithful to the morn.

FESTUM NATIVITATIS B.V.M.

The whirlwind, missioned with its wings
To drown the fleet or fell the tower,
Obeys Thee as the bird that sings
Her love-chant in a fleeting shower.

Amid an ordered universe
Man's spirit only dares rebel :
With light, O God, its darkness pierce !
With love its raging chaos quell !

III

FESTUM NATIVITATIS B.V.M.

WHEN thou wert born the murmuring world
Rolled on, nor dreamed of things to be,
From joy to sorrow madly whirled ;
Despair disguised in revelry.

A princess thou of David's line ;
The mother of the Prince of Peace ;
That hour no royal pomps were thine ;
The earth alone her boon increase

Before thee poured. September rolled
Down all the vine-clad Syrian slopes
Her robes of purple and of gold ;
And birds sang loud from olive tops.

Perhaps old foes, they knew not why,
Relented. From a fount long sealed
Tears rose, perhaps, to pity's eye :
Love-harvests crowned the barren field.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

The respirations of the year
At least grew soft. O'er valleys wide
Pine-roughened crags again shone clear ;
And the great temple, far descried,
To watchers, watching long in vain,
To patriots grey, in bondage nursed,
Flashed back their hope. "The second
fane
In glory shall surpass the first !"

IV

FESTUM VISITATIONIS

THE hilly region crossed with haste,
Its last dark ridge discerned no more,
Bright as the bow that spans a waste
She stood beside her cousin's door
And spake : that greeting came from God !
Filled with the Spirit from on high
Sublime the aged mother stood,
And cried aloud in prophecy :
"Soon as thy voice had touched mine ears
The child in childless age conceived,
Leaped up for joy ! Throughout all years
Blessed the woman who believed."
Type of electing love ! 'tis thine
To sound God's greeting from the skies !
Thou speak'st, and faith, a babe divine,
Leaps up thy Babe to recognize.

FESTUM NATIVITATIS

Within true hearts the second birth
Exults, though blind as yet and dumb.
The child of grace his hands puts forth,
And prophesies of things to come.

v

FESTUM NATIVITATIS

PRIMEVAL night had repossessed
Her empire in the fields of space ;
Calm lay the kine on earth's dark breast ;
The earth lay calm in heaven's embrace.

That hour, where shepherds kept their
flocks,
From God a glory sudden fell :
The splendour smote the trees and rocks,
And lay, like dew, along the dell.

God's angel close beside them stood :
"Fear nought," that angel said, and
then,
"Behold, I bring you tidings good :
The Saviour Christ is born to men."

And straightway round him myriads sang
Again that anthem, and again,
Till all the hollow valley rang,
"Glory to God, and peace to men."

RELIGIOUS POEMS

Thus in the violet-scented grove,
The May breeze murmuring softly by
them,
The children sang. Who Mary love
The long year through have Christmas
nigh them !

VI

DEI GENITRIX

I SEE Him : on thy lap He lies
'Mid that Judæan stable's gloom :
O sweet, O awful Sacrifice !
He smiles in sleep, yet knows the doom.

Thou gav'st Him life ! But was not this
That life which knows no parting breath ?
Unmeasured life ? unwaning bliss ?
Dread priestess, lo ! thou gav'st Him
death !

Beneath the Tree thy Mother stood ;
Beneath the Cross thou too shalt stand :
O Tree of Life ! O bleeding Rood !
Thy shadow stretches far its hand.

That God who made the sun and moon
In swaddling bands lies dumb and bound !
Love's Captive ! darker prison soon
Awaits Thee in the garden ground.

FESTUM EPIPHANIÆ

He wakens. Paradise looks forth
Beyond the portals of the grave.
Life, life thou gavest ! life to earth,
Not Him. Thine Infant dies to save.

VII

FESTUM EPIPHANIÆ

A VEIL is on the face of truth :
She prophesies behind a cloud ;
She ministers, in robes of ruth,
Nocturnal rites, and disallowed.

Eleusis hints, but dares not speak ;
The orphic minstrelsies are dumb ;
Lost are the sibyl's books, and weak
Earth's olden faith in Him to come.

But ah, but ah, that orient star !
On straw-roofed shed and large-eyed kine
It flashes, guiding from afar
The Magians' long-linked camel-line !

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh they bring—
Love, worship, life severe and hard ;
Their symbol gifts the Infant King
Accepts ; and truth is their reward.

Rejoice, O Sion, for thy night
Is past : the Lord, thy light, is born :
The Gentiles shall behold thy light ;
The kings walk forward in thy morn.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

VIII

GLADIO TRANSFIXA

To be the mother of her Lord—
What means it? This, a bleeding heart !
The pang that woke at Simeon's word
Worked inward, never to depart.

The dreadful might of sin she knew
As innocence alone can know :
O'er her its deadliest gloom it threw
As shades lie darkest on the snow.

Yet o'er her sorrow's depth no storm
Of earth's rebellious passion rolled :
So sleeps some lake no gusts deform
High on the dark hills' craggy fold.

In that still glass the unmeasured cliff,
With all its scars and clouds is shown :
And, mellowed in that Mother's grief,
At times, O Christ, we catch Thine own

IX

SAINT JOSEPH

TRUE prince of David's line ! thy chair
Is set on every poor man's floor :
Labour through thee a crown doth wear
More rich than kingly crowns of yore !

MATER CHRISTI

True confessor ! thine every deed,
While error ruled the world, or night,
Confessed aright the Christian creed,
The Christian warfare waged aright.

Teach us, like thee, our hearts to raise,
In toil, not ease, contemplatist ;
Like thee, o'er lowly tasks to gaze
On her whose eyes were still on Christ.

O teach us, thou whose ebbing breath
Was watched by Mary and her Son,
To welcome age, await in death,
True life's true garland, justly won.

X

MATER CHRISTI

He willed to lack ; He willed to bear ;
He willed by suffering to be schooled ;
He willed the chains of flesh to wear :
Yet from her arms the worlds He ruled.

As tapers 'mid the noontide glow
With merged, yet separate, radiance burn,
With human taste and touch, even so,
The things He knew He willed to learn.

He sat beside the lowly door :
His homeless eyes appeared to trace
In evening skies remembered lore,
And shadows of His Father's face.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

One only knew Him. She alone
Who nightly to His cradle crept,
And, lying like the moonbeam prone,
Worshipped her Maker as He slept.

XI

MATER SALVATORIS

O HEART with His in just accord !
O Soul His echo, tone for tone !
O Spirit that heard, and kept His word !
O Countenance moulded like His own !

Behold, she seemed on earth to dwell ;
But, hid in light, she ever sat
Beneath the Throne ineffable,
Chanting her clear Magnificat.

Fed from the boundless heart of God,
The joy within her rose more high,
And all her being overflowed,
Until that hour decreed drew nigh.

That hour, there crept her spirit o'er
The shadow of that pain world-wide
Whereof her Son the substance bore :
Him offering, half in Him she died.

Standing, like that strange moon, whereon
The mask of earth lies dim and dead,
An orb of glory, shadow-strewn,
Yet girdled with a luminous thread.

XII

FILIUM QUÆRENS

THREE days she seeks her Child in vain :

He who vouchsafed that holy woe
And makes the gates of glory pain,
He, He alone its depth can know.

She wears the garment He must wear ;
She tastes His chalice ! From a cross
Unseen she cries, " Where art Thou, where ?
Why hast Thou me forsaken thus ? "

With feebler hand she touches first
That sharpest thorn in all His crown,
Worse than the nails, the reed, the thirst,
Seeming desertion's icy frown !

O Saviour ! we, the weak, the blind,
We lose Thee, snared in pleasure's bound:
Teach us once more Thy face to find
Where only Thou art truly found,

In Thy true Church, its faith, its love,
Its anthemed rites or penance mute,
And that interior life whereof
Eternal life is flower and fruit.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

XIII

MATER DIVINÆ GRATIÆ

THE gifts a mother showers each day
Upon her softly-clamorous brood,
The gifts they value but for play,
The graver gifts of clothes and food.

Whence come they but from him who sows
With harder hand, and reaps, the soil;
The merit of his labouring brows,
The guerdon of his manly toil?

From Him the grace: through her it stands
Adjusted, meted, and applied;
And ever, passing through her hands,
Enriched it seems, and beautified.

Love's mirror doubles love's caress:
Love's echo to love's voice is true:
Their sire the children love not less
Because they clasp a mother too.

XIV

PLATO

HE looked on the transcendent light,
And, by the greatness of the fall,
Measuring the unfallen spirit's height,
That spirit deemed the body's thrall.

PASTOR ÆTERNUS

He knew the light, but not the love,
The sin, but not that cross of shame
Which raised us sinless spheres above !
Perhaps in death that knowledge came.

In death that vision o'er him stood,
Which all atoned, and all sufficed,
That vision of incarnate God,
The mother-maid, the infant Christ !

Perhaps, where'er the heart is pure,
In Gentile, or in Christian lands,
Despite dim clouds of faith obscure
By dying beds that vision stands,

To ripen in a moment's space
Truth's harvest, slumbering long in seed,
And fit—to meet the Judge's face—
With love in fear the spirit freed !

xv

PASTOR ÆTERNUS

I SCALED the hills. No murky blot,
No mist obscured the diamond air :
One time, O God, those hills were not !
Thou spak'st : at Thy command they were !

O'er ebon meres the ledges hung ;
High up were summits white with snow :
Some peak athwart the mountains flung
A crowned shadow creeping slow.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

Still crept it onwards. Vague and vast,
From ridge to ridge the mountains o'er
That king-like semblance slowly passed :
A shepherd's crook for staff it bore.

O Thou that ledest like a sheep
Thine Israel ! all the earth is Thine !
Thy mystic manhood still must sweep
Thy worlds with healing shade divine !

The airy pageant died with day :
The hills, the worlds themselves must die :
But Thou remainest such alway :
Thy love is from eternity.

XVI

MARIÆ CLIENS

A LITTLE longer on the earth
That aged creature's eyes repose,
Though half their light and all their mirth
Are gone ; and then for ever close.

She thinks that something done long since
Ill pleases God : or why should He
So long delay to take her hence
Who waits His will so lovingly ?

Whene'er she hears the church-bells toll,
She lifts her head, though not her eyes,
With wrinkled hands, but youthful soul,
Counting her lip-worn rosaries.

MATER DIVINÆ GRATIÆ

And many times the weight of years
Falls from her in her waking dreams :
A child her mother's voice she hears
To tend her father's steps she seems.

Once more she hears the whispering rains
On flowers and paths her girlhood trod ;
And of things present nought remains
Save the abiding sense of God.

Mary ! make smooth her downward way !
Not dearer to the young thou art
Than her. Make glad her latest May ;
And hold her, dying, on thy heart !

XVII

MATER DIVINÆ GRATIÆ

"THEY have no wine." The tender guest
Was grieved their feast should lack for
aught :
He seemed to slight her mute request :
Not less the grace she wished He wrought.

O great in love ! O full of grace !
That winds in thee, a river broad,
From Christ, with heaven-reflecting face,
Gladdening the City of thy God :

RELIGIOUS POEMS

Be this thy gift : that man henceforth
No more should creep through life content
(Draining the springs impure of earth)
With life's material element.

Let sacraments to sense succeed :
Let nought be winning, nought be good
Which fails of Him to speak, and bleed
Once more with His all-cleansing blood !

"They have no wine." At heaven's high
feast
That soft petition still hath place,
And bathes—so wills that kingly Priest
Whose "hour" *is* come—the worlds with
grace.

XVIII

THE BEGINNING OF MIRACLES

THE water changed to wine she saw :
She saw nought else of shapes around :
With such a trance of loving awe
That first of signs her spirit bound.

She saw in perspective benign
Whate'er that first of signs rehearsed,
That later chalice, and the wine
More changed, that slaked a holier thirst.

LUMEN NUPTIARUM

She saw calm homes of love and rest,
The earthly life to heaven allied,
The deaths sabbatical and blest
Of saints that died as Joseph died.

She saw a world serene, august,
A world new-made, whose every part
Was fashioned, not of sinful dust,
But in, and from the Saviour's Heart.

She saw the stream of human kind,
So long defiled with weeds and mud,
In fontal pureness onward wind
To meet the eternal ocean flood

Within whose breast a love-star shook
More fair than he that from the skies,
As home their silent way they took,
Illumed her never tearless eyes.

XIX

LUMEN NUPTIARUM

SAY, who is she that walks on air,
Nor stains her foot with sinful earth?
The all-tender vestal, chaste and fair,
In death more blameless than at birth.

Say, who is she, serenely blest,
That walks the dustier ways of life
With foot immaculate as her breast?
That woman-maid, the Christian wife

RELIGIOUS POEMS

Her love, a full-blown rose, each hour
Its snowy bud regerminates ;
The star of Eden lights her bower ;
Her children's laughter cheers its gates.

Yet half she is, that wife—still bride—
Owes to that vestal never wed,
As homes through Him are sanctified
Who had not where to lay His head.

Both mysteries sleep in one, secure—
Like twins in one white cradle laid,
The life detached and marriage pure,
One mother boast—the Mother-maid.

XX

“WHEN THOU HAST SET MY HEART AT LIBERTY”

How narrow earthly loves—even those
Clouded the least by earthly stain !
What bars of self around them close !
Not death itself can burst the chain.

We love amiss ; we sorrow worse ;
Wan vintage of a barren sun
We drain around an ill-waked corse
In death-vaults of delight foregone.

VAS INSIGNE DEVOTIONIS

O thou whose love to Him was knit
So near thee, yet so high above,
In whom to love was to submit,
In whom submission meant but love ;
Whose heart great love dilated so
That by His Cross, a Mother twice,
All men thy sons became ; whose woe
But crowned true love's self-sacrifice.
Make thou the bosom, pure before,
Through grief more solid-pure to grow ;
The lily vase that shook of yore
Make thou the lily filled with snow !
The thought of thee among the blest
O'er earth a bliss snow-pure doth breathe ;
Thy rest in heaven diffuses rest
O'er those who love and mourn beneath.

XXI

VAS INSIGNE DEVOTIONIS

O STRONG in prayer ! our spirits bind
To God : our bodies keep from sin :
Live in our hearts that Christ may find
An incorrupt abode therein :
That He, the Eternal Spirit, He
Who overshadowed with His grace
The depths of thy humility,
In us may have a resting-place.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

Who love thee prosper ! As a breeze
Thou waft'st them o'er the ways divine :
Strange heights they reach with magic ease
Through music-moulded discipline.

" If I but touch His vesture's hem
I shall be healed, and strong and free "—
Thou wert His vesture, Mary !—them
His virtue heals that reach to thee.

XXII

BEATI QUI AUDIUNT VERBUM DEI

WHEN from the crowd that voice was raised
That blessed the Mother of the Lord,
Not her the Son who loved her praised,
But all who heard and kept His word.

O answer meet ! to her how dear,
To her too great her crown to boast !
The meek were glad that praise to hear :
The meekest, loftiest, joyed the most.

Above her soul's pure mirror crept
No mist : no doubt within her stirred :
She asked not, " Who His words hath kept,
Like her, the mother of the Word ? "

Her tender heart rejoiced to think
That all who say, " Thy will be mine,"
Without or with the external link,
In heart bring forth the Babe divine.

REGINA PROPHETARUM

Chief of the prophets John might be,
Yet, but for that his happier place
In Jesus' kingdom, less than he
The least one in the realm of grace.

The mother of Incarnate God
Some prophet's mother *seemed*, alone :
His hour not yet was come : abroad
To noise her fame had noised His own.

XXIII

REGINA PROPHETARUM

SHE took the timbrel, as the tide
Rushed, reffluent, down the Red Sea shore :
"The Lord hath triumphèd," she cried :
Her song rang out above the roar

Of lustral waves that, wall to wall,
Fell back upon that host abhorred :
Above the gloomy watery pall,
As eagles soar, her anthem soared.

Miriam, rejoice ! a mightier far
Than thou one day shall sing with thee !
Who rises, brightening like a star
Above yon bright baptismal sea.

That harp which David touched who rears
Heaven-high above those waters wide ?
The prophet-queen ! Throughout all years
She sings the triumph of the bride !

XXIV

UT ACIES ORDINATA

As children when, with heavy tread,
Men sad of face, unseen before,
Have borne away their mother dead,
So stand the nations thine no more.

From room to room those children roam,
Heart-stricken by the unwonted black:
Their house no longer seems their home:
They search, yet know not what they lack

Years pass : self-will and passion strike
Their roots more deeply day by day ;
Old kinsmen sigh ; and "how unlike"
Is all the tender neighbours say :

And yet at moments, like a dream,
A mother's image o'er them flits :
Like hers their eyes a moment beam ;
The voice grows soft : the brow unknits.

Such, Mary, are the realms once thine
That know no more thy golden reign :
Hold forth from heaven thy Babe divine !
O make thine orphans thine again !

THE MEETING ON CALVARY

XXV

THE MEETING ON CALVARY

SHE stands before Him on the road :
He bears the Cross; He climbs the steep :
Three times He sinks beneath His load :
To earth He sinks : she does not weep.

She may not touch that Cross whose weight
Against His will a stranger bears :
In heart to bear it, and to wait
His upward footsteps : this is hers.

She may not prop that thorn-crowned Head :
The waves of men between them break.
Another's hand the veil must spread
Against that forehead and that cheek.

Her eyes on His are fastened. Lo !
There stand they, met on Calvary's height,
Twin mirrors of a single woe
Made by reflection infinite.

The sons of Sion round them rave :
The Roman trumpet storms the wind :
They goad Him on with spear and stave :
He passes by : she drops behind.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

XXVI

STABAT MATER

SHE stood : she sank not. Slowly fell
Adown the Cross the atoning blood :
In agony ineffable
She offered still His own to God.

No pang of His her bosom spared,
She felt in Him its several power ;
But she in heart His priesthood shared :
She offered sacrifice that hour.

“ Behold thy Son ! ” Ah, last bequest !
It breathed His last farewell ! The sword
Predicted, pierced that hour her breast :
She stood : she answered not a word.

His own in John He gave. She wore
Thenceforth the mother-crown of earth.
O Eve ! thy sentence too she bore ;
That hour in sorrow she brought forth.

XXVII

MATER DOLOROSA

FROM her He passed ; yet still with her
The endless thought of Him found rest ;
A sad but sacred branch of myrrh
For ever folded in her breast.

ASCENSIO DOMINI

A boreal winter void of light—
Such seemed her widowed days forlorn :
She slept ; but in her breast all night
Her heart lay waking till the morn.

Sad flowers on Calvary that grew ;
Sad fruits that ripened from the Cross ;
These were the only joys she knew ;
Yet all but these she counted loss.

Love strong as death ! She lived through
thee
That mystic life whose every breath
From life's low harpstring amorously
Draws out the sweetened name of death.

Love stronger far than death or life !
Thy martyrdom was o'er the last :
Her eyelids drooped ; and without strife
To Him she loved her spirit passed.

XXVIII

ASCENSIO DOMINI

REJOICE, O earth, thy crown is won :
Rejoice, rejoice, ye heavenly host !
And thou, the Mother of the Son,
Rejoice the first ; rejoice the most !

RELIGIOUS POEMS

Who captive led captivity—
From Hades' void circumference
Who raised the patriarch band on high
There rules, and sends us graces thence.

Rejoice, glad earth, o'er winter's grave
With altars wreathed and clarions blown;
And thou, the race redeemed, out-brave
The rites of nature with thine own!

Rejoice, O Mary! thou that long
Didst lean thy breast upon the sword—
Sad nightingale, the spirit's song
That sang'st all night! He reigns, restored!

Rejoice! He goes, the Paraclete
To send! Rejoice! He reigns on high!
The sword lies broken at thy feet,
His triumph is thy victory!

XXIX

IMPLICIT FAITH

Of all great Nature's tones that sweep
Earth's resonant bosom, far or near,
Low-breathed or loudest, shrill or deep,
How few are grasped by mortal ear!

IMPLICIT FAITH

Ten octaves close our scale of sound :
Its myriad grades, distinct or twined,
Transcend our hearing's petty bound,
To us as colours to the blind.

In sound's unmeasured empire thus
The heights, the depths alike we miss :
Ah, but in measured sound to us
A compensating spell there is.

In holy music's golden speech
Remotest notes to notes respond :
Each octave is a world ; yet each
Vibrates to worlds its own beyond.

Our narrow pale the vast resumes ;
Our sea-shell whispers of the sea :
Echoes are ours of angel plumes
That winnow far infinity !

Clasp thou of truth the central core !
Hold fast that centre's central sense !
An atom there shall fill thee more
Than realms on truth's circumference.

That cradled Saviour, mute and small,
Was God—is God while worlds endure !
Who holds Truth truly holds it all
In essence or in miniature.

Know what thou know'st ! He knoweth much
Who knows not many things : and he
Knows most whose knowledge hath a touch
Of God's divine simplicity.

XXX

RESPEXIT HUMILITATEM

Not all thy purity, although
The whitest moon that ever lit
The peaks of Lebanonian snow
Shone dusk and dim compared with it;—

Not that great love of thine, whose beams
Transcended in their virtuous heat
Those suns which melt the ice-bound streams,
And make earth's pulses newly beat ;

It was not these that from the sky
Drew down to thee the Eternal Word :
He looked on thy humility ;
He knew thee, "handmaid of thy Lord."

Let no one claim with thee a part ;
Let no one, Mary, name thy name,
While, aping God, upon his heart
Pride sits, a demon robed in flame.

Proud vices, die ! Where sin has place
Be sin's avenger self-disgust ;
Proud virtues, doubly die, that grace
At last may burgeon from your dust !

MAY CAROLS

XXXI

BROW-BOUND with myrtle and with gold,
Spring, sacred now from blasts and blights,
Lifts high in firm, untrembling hold,
Her chalice of fulfilled delights.

Confirmed around her queenly lip
The smile late wavering, on she moves ;
And seems through deepening tides to step
Of steadier joys and larger loves.

The stony ash itself relents,
Into the blue embrace of May,
Sinking, like old impenitents
Heart-touched at last ; and far away,

The long wave yearns along the coast
With sob suppressed, like that which thrills
(While o'er the altar mounts the Host)
Some chapel on the Irish hills.



EPILOGUE

THE SON OF MAN

I GAZED—it was the paschal night—
In vision on the starry sphere :
Like suns the stars made broad their light :
Then knew I earth to heaven drew near.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

The thrones of darkness down were hurled ;
The veil was rent ; the bond was riven :
Then knew I that man's little world [heaven.
Had reached its home—the heart of

Made strong by God, mine eyes with awe
Still turned from star-changed sun to sun
That ringed the earth in ranks, and saw
A spirit o'er each, that stood thereon.

And lo! by every spirit stood
More high, the venerable Sign :
Then knew I that the atoning blood
Had reached that sphere; the blood divine.

From orb to orb an anthem passed ;
“ The blessing of the Lord of all
Hath reached us from the least and last
Of stars that gem the heavenly hall ;

“ For He, that greatest, loves the least ;
Puts down the mighty, lifts the low :
On earth began His bridal feast :
Our triumph is its overflow ! ”

Then earth, that great “ new earth ” * foretold,
Assumed, at last, her glories new—
Or were they hers indeed of old,
Though veiled so long from mortal view ?

* “ There shall be new heavens and a new earth.”

THE SON OF MAN

While—with her changing—far and wide
Those worlds around her, blent in one,
Became that “city of the bride”
Which needs no light of moon or sun.

Their glory had not suffered change ;
Their vastness ever vaster grew,
As golden street and columned range,
To one unmeasured temple drew.

There stood the saints by suffering proved,
Exiles from God to God returned ;
And near them those our childhood loved ;
Revered the most ; the longest mourned.

Ere long through all that throbbing frame
Of things beheld and things unseen
Rolled forth that name which none can
name,
Celestial music, not terrene :

And down that luminous infinite
I saw an altar and a throne,
And, near to each, a Form, all light,
That, resting, moved, and moved alone :

But if He filled that throne, or knelt
That altar nigh, or lamb-like lay,
I saw not. This I saw, and felt,
That Son of Man was God for aye.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

That Son of Man arose and stood,
And from His vest, more white than snow,
Slowly there dawned a cross of blood
That through the glory seemed to grow :

Above the heavens His hands He raised
To bless those worlds whose race was run ;
And lo ! in either palm there blazed
The blood-red sign of victory won ;

That blood the Bethlehem shepherds eyed,
Warming His cheek who slept apart :
That blood He drew, the Crucified,
Far-fountained from His mother's heart.



ECCLESIA DEI

HYMN

ECCLESIA DEI

WHO is she that stands triumphant
Rock in strength upon the Rock,
Like some city crown'd with turrets
Braving storm and earthquake shock ?
Who is she her arms extending,
Blessing thus a world restored ;
All the anthems of creation
Lifting to creation's Lord ?
• Hers the kingdom, hers the sceptre !
Fall, ye nations, at her feet !
Hers that truth whose fruit is freedom ;
Light her yoke ; her burden sweet !

As the moon its splendour borrows
From a sun unseen all night,
So from Christ, the Sun of Justice,
Draws His Church her sacred light.
Touch'd by His her hands have healing,
Bread of life, absolving key :
Christ Incarnate is her Bridegroom ;
The Spirit hers ; His temple she.
Hers the kingdom, hers the sceptre !
Fall, ye nations, at her feet !
Hers that truth whose fruit is freedom ;
Light her yoke ; her burden sweet !

RELIGIOUS POEMS

Empires rise and sink like billows ;
Vanish and are seen no more ;
Glorious as the star of morning
She o'erlooks their wild uproar :
Hers the household all-embracing,
Hers the vine that shadows earth ;
Blest thy children, mighty Mother !
Safe the stranger at thy hearth.

Hers the kingdom, hers the sceptre !
Fall, ye nations, at her feet !
Hers that truth whose fruit is freedom ;
Light her yoke ; her burden sweet !

Like her Bridegroom, heavenly, human,
Crown'd and militant in one,
Chanting nature's great assumption
And the abasement of the Son,
Her magnificats, her dirges
Harmonize the jarring years ;
Hands that fling to heaven the censer
Wipe away the orphan's tears.

Hers the kingdom, hers the sceptre !
Fall, ye nations, at her feet !
Hers that truth whose fruit is freedom ;
Light her yoke ; her burden sweet !

HYMN FOR GOOD FRIDAY

HYMN FOR GOOD FRIDAY

O LAMB of God! on whom alone
Earth's penal weight of sin was thrown,
Have mercy, Saviour, on Thine own.
For Thou art man. The Virgin gave
To Thee her breast; the earth a grave.
If smiles, while Infant yet, on Thee
Were found, Thy Mother knows, not we.
A man, o'er Lazarus lulled asleep,
With them that wept Thou too didst weep.
Thy tears in dust of Salem sunk
Ere yet her heart Thy blood had drunk.
All griefs of mortals Thou hast known—
Have mercy, Saviour, on Thine own.

O Lamb of God, on whom was laid
That debt all worlds had never paid,
Have mercy, Saviour; hear and aid.
For Thou art God. With God, behold,
'Thou sat'st upon His throne of old :
Dread throne surpassing depth and height,
Eternal throne, and infinite !
Yet pity reached Thee there for man,
Ere worlds were made, or pain began.
With Abel bleeding Thou didst lie,
With Isaac forth wast led to die,
With Stephen stoned, and since, and yet,
With all Thy Martyrs' blood art wet.

RELIGIOUS POEMS

O Lamb of God, on whom alone
Earth's penal weight of sin was thrown,
Have mercy, Saviour, on Thine own.
Again the depths are stirred : we wait
Before the shrine's forbidding gate,
We stand in sable garments clad :
The infant at the breast is sad.
This day unconsecrated lies
The Host : unblessed the Sacrifice !
Tremble the altars disarrayed :
The mighty temples are dismayed :
Their chaunts are dead : nor lamp, nor
light
Save from the Sepulchres at night.

O Lamb of God, on whom was laid
The debt all worlds had never paid,
Have mercy, Saviour ; hear and aid.
Again rings out that sound abhorred :
Again, O widowed Church, the sword
Pierces thy sacred heart—the cry
Of “Crucify Him, crucify!”
The priest his garment rends again ;
Once more blaspheme that perjured
twain ;
Once more the upbraiding voice foretold
Peals through dark shades from gardens
cold.
—Prince of the Apostles ! ah, that we,
Like thee who fall, might weep like
thee !

HYMN FOR GOOD FRIDAY

O Lamb of God, on whom alone
Earth's penal weight of sin was thrown,
Have mercy, Saviour, on Thine own.

By each step along that road :
By that Cross, Thine awful load :
By the Hebrew women's wail :
By the sponge, the lance, and nail :
By Mary's martyrdom, when she
In Thee died, yet offered Thee :
By that mocking crowd accursed :
By Thy dreadful, unquenched thirst :
By Thy three hours' agony :
And by that last unanswered cry—

O Lamb of God, on whom was laid
The debt all worlds had never paid,
Have mercy, Saviour, hear and aid.
Like shapes at God's last trump new-
risen,
My sins time-buried rise—and listen.
The veil is rent ; the rocks are riven ;
And demons sweep yon darkened heaven.
Three crosses bar the black on high,
That thief beside Thee hung so nigh.
How rolls he now on Thee his eye,
Nor sees beyond Thee hills or sky !
Thus, Christ, we turn from all to Thee—
“ Miserere, Domine ! ”

SILENCE IN THE HEAVENS

THERE was silence in the heavens
When the Son of Man was led
From the Garden to the Judgement ;
Sudden silence, strange and dread !
All along the empyreal coasts,
On their knees the immortal hosts
Watched with sad and wondering eyes
That tremendous sacrifice.

There was silence in the heavens
When the priest his garment tore ;
Silence when that twain accursed
Their false witness faintly bore.
Silence—though a tremor crept
O'er their ranks—the angels kept
While that Judge, dismayed though proud,
Washed his hands before the crowd.

SILENCE IN THE HEAVENS

But when Christ His Cross was bearing,
Fainting oft, by slow degrees,
Then went forth the angelic thunder
Of legions rising from their knees.
Each bright spirit grasped a brand ;
And lightning flashed from band to band :
An instant more had launched them forth
Avenging terrors to the earth.

Then from God there fell a glory
Round and o'er that multitude ;
And by every fervent angel
With hushing hand another stood ;
Another, never seen before,
Stood one moment and no more !
Peace, brethren, peace ! to us is given
Suffering ; vengeance is for heaven.

TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE wind rang out from depths of woods
And pealed through valleys bent
Among the echoing hills like tubes
Of some vast instrument.
Its sound we heard ; but know not whence
It came, nor whither went.

The wind upon our forehead blows :
In gleams of lambent flame
The sunbeams flash from wave and leaf :
The hour is now the same
As when to Christ's anointed twelve
That promised Spirit came.

The sound as of a rushing wind
Before His wings He flung :
And leaped on those uplifted brows
In many a flaming tongue !—
O breathe on us Thy seven-fold powers :
O dwell our hearts among !

Live thou in Christ's mysterious vine,
Until her branches spread
Among the stars—to them as flowers
'Mid locks of one new wed :
And clasp in their descending arch
The earth's wide bridal-bed !

HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP

HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP

“HE giveth His beloved sleep.”
The haughty sow the wind :
The storm they sow ; the tempest reap ;
But rest they cannot find.

In sleep itself their furrowed brows
That care-worn mark retain ;
Avenger of the guilt it shows
The curse and brand of Cain !

Rest is of God. He doth not sleep ;
But while His children rest
His hand outstretched and still doth keep
O'er earth, their shadowed nest.

His holy angels chaunt around,
To chase dark dreams away,
That slumbers innocent and sound
May leave serene the day.

REALITY

Love thy God, and love Him only :
And thy breast will ne'er be lonely.
In that one great Spirit meet
All things mighty, grave and sweet.
Vainly strives the soul to mingle
With a creature of our kind :
Vainly hearts with hearts are twined ;
For the deepest still is single.
An impalpable resistance
Holds like natures still at distance.
Mortal ! love that Holy One !
Or dwell for aye alone.

Irish Poems

FROM "LEGENDS OF ST PATRICK "

(*The Angel speaks*)

"THAT thou sought'st
Shall not lack consummation. Many a race,
Shrivelling in sunshine of its prosperous years,
Shall cease from faith, and, shamed though
shameless, sink
Back to its native clay ; but over thine
God shall extend the shadow of His hand,
And through the night of centuries teach to
her
In woe that song which, when the nations
wake,
Shall sound their glad deliverance ; nor alone
This nation, from the blind dividual dust
Of instincts brute, thoughts driftless, warring
wills,
By thee evoked and shapen by thy hands
To God's fair image which confers alone
Manhood on nations, shall to God stand true ;
But nations far in undiscovered seas
Shall wear the kingly ermine of her faith,
Fleece uncorrupted of the Immaculate Lamb,
For ever lands remote shall raise to God
Her fanes ; and eagle-nurturing isles hold fast

IRISH POEMS

Her hermit cells : thy nation shall not walk
Accordant with the Gentiles of this world,
But as a race elect sustain the crown
Or bear the cross : and when the end is come
When in God's mount the twelve great thrones
 are set,
And round it roll the rivers four of fire,
And in their circuit meet the people three
Of heaven and earth and hell, fulfilled that
 day
Shall be the Saviour's word, what time He
 stretched
Thy crozier staff forth from His glory-cloud
And sware to thee, "When they that with
 Me walked,
Sit with Me on their everlasting thrones
Judging the twelve tribes of Mine Israel,
Thy people thou shalt judge in righteousness.
Thou therefore kneel, and bless thy land of
 Eire."

Then Patrick knelt, and blessed the land and
 said,
"Praise be to God who hears the sinner's
 prayer."

THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF

THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF:

OR, THE KING'S SACRIFICE

[The battle of Clontarf, fought A.D. 1014, annulled for ever the Danish power in Ireland. During two centuries and more the sons of the North had landed on the Irish coasts, sacked the monasteries, burned the cities and churches, and in many places well-nigh destroyed the Christian civilization of earlier times, although they were never able to establish a monarchy throughout Ireland. The native dynasties for the most part remained, and Brian the Great, then king of all Ireland, though aged and blind, led forth the native hosts against the invaders for one supreme effort. He placed his son Murrough in command; and he offered up his life for his country and wrought her deliverance. His sons and his grandson partook his glory and his fate. His death was a favourite theme with the chroniclers and bards of ancient Erin.]

I

"ANSWER, thou that from the height
Look'st to left, and look'st to right;
Answer thou, how goes the fight?"

II

Thus spake King Brian, by his tent,
Kneeling with sceptred hands that leant
Upon that altar which, where'er
He marched, kept pure his path with prayer

IRISH POEMS

For, after all his triumphs past
That made him wondrous 'mid his peers,
On the blind king God's will had cast
The burden of his fourscore years :
And therefore when that morn, at nine,
He rode along the battle's van,
No sword he lifted, but the sign
Of Him who died for man.
King Brian's fleshly strength decayed,
Three times in puissance waxed his spirit,
And tall, like oak-trees, towered his merit.
And like a praying host he prayed.
From nine to twelve, with crown on head,
Full fifty prayers the king had said ;
And unto each such power was given
It shook the unopening gates of heaven.

III

"O king, the battle goes this hour
As when two seas are met in might,
When billow billow doth devour,
And tide with tide doth fight :
"I watch the waves of war ; but none
Can see what banners rise or fall :
Sea-clouds on rush, sea-crests on run,
And blood is over all."

IV

Then prayed the king once more, head-bare,
And made himself a cross in prayer,
With outstretched arms and forehead prone
Staid on that topmost altar-stone

THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF

Gem-charged, and cleansed from mortal taint,
And strong with bones of many a saint.
In youth his heart for God had yearned
And Eire : now thrice his youth returned :
A child full oft, ere woke the bird,
The convent's nocturns he had heard
In old Kincora, or that isle
Which guards, thus late, its wasted pile,
While winds of night the tall towers shook ;
And he would peer into that Book
Which lay, lamp-lit, on eagle's wings,
Wherein God's saints in gold and blue
Stood up, and prophets stood, and kings ;
And he the martyrs knew,
And maids, and confessors each one,
And—tabernacled there in light—
That blissful Virgin enough bright
To light a burnt-out sun.
The blazoned letters well he kened
That stood like gateways keeping ward,
Before the feast-days set to guard
Long ways of wisdom without end :
He knew the music notes black-barred,
And music notes, like planted spears

Whereon who bends a fixed regard
The gathering anthem hears
Like wakening storms 'mid pines that lean
Ere sunrise o'er some dusk ravine.
The thoughts that nursed his youth, that hour
Were with his age, and armed with power.

IRISH POEMS

V

So fifty psalms he sang, and then
Rolled round his sightless eyes again
And spake : "Thou watcher on the height
Make answer quick, how goes the fight?"

VI

"O king, the battle goes as when
The mill-wheel circles round and round :
The battle reels, and bones of men
Beneath its wheel are ground :

"The war-field lies like Tomar's wood
By axes marred, or charred with fire
Where, black o'er wood-ways ruin-strewed,
Rises the last oak spire."

VII

Then to his altar by the tent
Once more King Brian turned, and bent
Unsceptred hands and head discrowned
Down from that altar to the ground
In such sort that the cold March air
With fir-cones swept his snow-white hair,
And prayed, "O Thou that from the skies
Dost see what is, and what must be,
Make mine and me Thy sacrifice
But set this people free !"

THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF

VIII

That hour, he knew, in many a fane
Late ravaged by the Pagan Dane,
God's priests were offering, far and wide,
The Mass of the Presanctified ;
For lo ! it was Good Friday morn,
And Christ once more was crowned with
thorn :

God's Church, he knew, from niche and shrine
Had swept those gauds that time consumes,
Whate'er sea-cave, or wood, or mine
Yield from their sunless wombs :
Veiled were the sacred images,
He knew, like vapour-shrouded trees ;
Vanished gold lamp, and chalice rare
The astonished altars stripped and bare
Because upon the Cross, stone-dead,
Christ lay that hour disraimented.

IX

He prayed—then spake—"How goes the
fight ?"
Then answer reached him from the height

X

"O king, the battle goes as though
God weighed two nations in His scale ;
And now the fates of Eire sink low,
Now theirs that wear the mail :

IRISH POEMS

“O king, thy sons, through God’s decree,
Are dead—save one, the best of all,
Murrough—and now, ah, woe is me !
I see his standard fall !”

XI

It fell : but as it fell, above
Through lightning-lighted skies on drove
A thousand heavenly standards, dyed
In martyrdom’s ensanguined tide,
And every tower, and town, and fane
That blazed of old round Erin’s shore,
Down crashed, it seemed, in heaven again,
So dire that thunder’s roar !
The wrath had come : the Danes gave way ;
For Brian’s prayer had power that day ;
Seaward they rushed, the race abhorred—
The sword of prayer had quelled their sword :
So fled they to the ship-thronged coast ;
But, random-borne through Tolga’s glade
A remnant from that routed host
Rushed by where Brian prayed,
And, swinging forth his brand, down leaped
Black Brodar, he that foremost rode,
And from the kingly shoulders swept
The old head, praising God ;
And cried aloud : “ Let all men tell
That Brodar, he that leagues with hell,
That Brodar of the magic mail
Slew Brian of the Gael.”

THE BATTLE OF CLONTARF

XII

Him God destroyed ! The accursed one lay
Like beast, unburied where he fell :
But Brian and his sons this day
In Armagh Church sleep well.

And Brian's grandson strong and fair,
Clutching a sea-king by the hair,
Went with him far through Tolga's wave,
Went with him to the same sea-grave.
So Eire gave thanks to God, though sad,
And took the blessing and the bale,
And sang, in funeral garments clad,
The vengeance of the Gael.
Silent all night the Northmen haled
Their dead adown the bleeding wharf :
Far north at dawn the pirates sailed ;
But on thy shore, Clontarf,
Old Eire once more with wan cheeks wet
Gave thanks that He who shakes the skies
Had burst His people's bond, and yet
Decreed that sacrifice :
For God is One who gives and takes,
Who lifts the low, and fells the proud ;
Who loves His land of Eire, and makes
His rainbow in His cloud.

Thus sang to Eire her bard of old ;
Thus sang to trampled kerne and serf,
While, sunset-like, her age of gold
Came back to green Clontarf.

THE BARD ETHELL

(*Thirteenth Century*)

I

I AM Ethell, the son of Conn !
Here I live at the foot of the hill,
I am clansman to Brian and servant to none ;
Whom I hated I hate, whom I loved love
still.
Blind am I. On milk I live,
And meat (God sends it) on each saint's
day,
Though Donald Mac Art—may he never
thrive—
Last Shrovetide drove half my kine away !

II

At the brown hill's base, by the pale blue
lake,
I dwell, and see the things I saw ;
The heron flap heavily up from the brake,
The crow fly homeward with twig and straw,
The wild duck, a silver line in wake,
Cutting the still mere to far Bunaw.
And the things that I heard, though deaf,
I hear ;
From the tower in the island the feastful
cheer ;

THE BARD ETHELL

The horn from the woodlands ; the plunge
 of the stag,
With the loud hounds after him, down from
 the crag.
Sweet is the chase but the battle is sweeter ;
More healthful, more joyous, for true men
 meeter !

III

My hand is weak ; it once was strong :
 My heart burns still with its ancient fire ;
If any man smite me he does me wrong,
 For I was the Bard of Brian Mac Guire.
If any man slay me—not unaware,
 By no chance blow, nor in wine and revel,
I have stored beforehand a curse in my prayer
 For his kith and kin : for his deed is evil.

IV

There never was king, and there never will be,
In battle or banquet like Malachi !
The seers his reign had predicted long ;
He honour'd the bards, and gave gold for
 song.
If rebels arose he put out their eyes ;
 If robbers plunder'd or burn'd the fanes
He hung them in chaplets, like rosaries,
 That others beholding might take more
 pains !
There was none to women more reverent-
 minded

IRISH POEMS

For he held his mother, and Mary, dear ;
If any man wrong'd them that man he
 blinded

Or straight amerced him of hand or ear.
There was none who founded more convents
 —none ;

In his palace the old and the poor were fed ;
The orphan might walk, or the widow's son,
 Without groom or page to his throne or
 bed.

In his council he mused with great brows
 divine,
And his eyes like the eyes of the musing kine ;
Upholding a sceptre o'er which men said
Seven Spirits of Wisdom like fire-tongues
 played.

He drain'd ten lakes and he built ten
 bridges ;

He bought a gold book for a thousand
He slew ten princes who brake their pledges ;
With the bribed and the base he scorn'd
 to carouse.

He was sweet and awful ; through all his
 reign

God gave great harvests to vale and plain ;
From his nurse's milk he was kind and brave ;
And when he went down to his well-wept
 grave,

Through the triumph of penance his soul
 uprose

To God and the saints. Not so his foes !

THE BARD ETHELL

V

The king that came after ! ah woe, woe, woe !
He doubted his friend and he trusted his foe.
He bought and he sold : his kingdom old
He pledged and he pawned to avenge a
spite :

No bard or prophet his birth foretold :
He was guarded and warded both day and
night :

He counsell'd with fools and had boors at
his feast ;

He was cruel to Christian and kind to
beast :

Men smiled when they talked of him far o'er
the wave :

Well paid were the mourners that wept o'er
his grave.

God plagued for his sake his people
sore :—

They sinn'd ; for the people should watch
and pray

That their prayers, like angels at window and
door,

May keep from the king the bad thought
away !

VI

The sun has risen : on lip and brow

He greets me—I feel it—with golden wand.

Ah, bright-faced Norna ! I see thee now ;

Where first I saw thee I see thee stand !

IRISH POEMS

From the trellis the girl look'd down on me :
Her maidens stood near: it was late in
spring :

The grey priests laugh'd as she cried in glee
" Good bard, a song in my honour sing ! "
I sang her praise in a loud-voiced hymn
To God who had fashion'd her, face and limb,
For the praise of the clan and the land's
behoof :

So she flung me a flower from the trellis roof.
Ere long I saw her the hill descending ;
O'er the lake the May morning rose moist
and slow ;

She pray'd me, her smile with the sweet
voice blending,

To teach her all that a woman should
know.

Panting she stood : she was out of breath :
The wave of her little breast was shaking :
From eyes still childish and dark as death
Came womanhood's dawn through a dew-
cloud breaking.

Norna was never long time the same :
By a spirit so strong was her slight form
moulded

The curves swell'd out of the flower-like
frame

In joy : in grief to a bud she folded :
When she listen'd her eyes grew bright and
large

Like springs rain-fed that dilate their marge.

THE BARD ETHELL

VII

So I taught her the hymn of Patrick the
apostle,
And the marvels of Bridget and Colum-
kille :
And ere long she sang like the lark or the
throstle,
Sang the deeds of the servants of God's
high will :
I told her of Brendon, who found afar
Another world 'neath the western star ;
Of our three great bishops in Lindisfarne
isle ;
Of St Fursey the wondrous, Fiacre without
guile ;
Of Sedulius, hymn-maker when hymns were
rare,*
Of Scotus the subtle, who clove a hair
Into sixty parts, and had margin to spare.
To her brother I spake of Oisín and Fionn,
And they wept at the death of great Oisín's
son.†

* This Christian poet, whose hymns are still used in the Office of the Church, was an Irishman, and flourished in the fifth century.

† The publications of the Ossianic Society have made us familiar with Fionn Mac Cumhal (the Fingal of McPherson) chief of the far-famed Irish militia, instituted in the third century to protect the kingdom from foreign invasion. Its organization rendered it an army of extraordinary effi-

IRISH POEMS

I taught the heart of the boy to revel
In tales of old greatness that never tire,
And the virgin's, up-springing from earth's
low level,
To wed with heaven like the altar fire.
I taught her all that a woman should know :
And that none should teach her worse lore,
I gave her
A dagger keen, and taught her the blow
That subdues the knave to discreet be-
haviour.
A sand-stone there on my knee she set,
And sharpen'd its point—I can see her yet—
I held back her hair, and she sharpen'd the
edge
While the wind piped low through the
reeds and sedge.

VIII

She died in the convent on Ina's height :
I saw her the day that she took the veil :
As slender she stood as the Paschal light,
As tall and slender and bright and pale !

ciency ; but existing as a separate power it be-
came in time as formidable to the native sovereigns
as to foreigners. The terrible battle of Gavra was
its ruin. In it Oscar, the son of Oisín (or Ossian)
and consequently the grandson of Fionn, fell in
single combat with the Irish king Carbrí, and
nearly his whole army perished with him, A.D.
284. To this day Fionn and Oisín are household
names in those parts of western Ireland in which
the traditional Gaelic poetry is recited.

THE BARD ETHELL

When I saw her, I dropp'd as dead : be-
reaven
Is earth when her holy ones leave her for
heaven :
Her brother fell in the fight at Beigh :
May they plead for me, both, on my dying
day !

IX

All praise to the man who brought us the
Faith !
'Tis a staff by day and our pillow in death !
All praise, I say, to the holy youth
Who heard in a dream * from Tyrawley's
strand
That wail, " Put forth o'er the sea thy
hand ;
In the dark we die : give us hope and
truth ! "

* Some time after St Patrick, then about thirty years of age, had placed himself under the direction of St Germain of Auxerre, he had a marvelous vision. " A man named Victoricius appeared to present him with a large parcel of letters, one of which was inscribed, ' The Voice of the Irish ' ; and while reading it St Patrick thought he heard the cries of a multitude of people near the wood of Foclut, in the district now called Tyrawley, in Mayo, saying : ' We entreat thee to come, holy youth, and walk still among us. ' " —Haverty's *History of Ireland*, p. 64.

IRISH POEMS

But Patrick built not on Iorras' shore
That convent where now the Franciscans
dwell :
Columba was mighty in prayer and war ;
But the young monk preaches, as loud as
his bell,
That love must rule all and wrongs be for-
given,
Or else, he is sure, we shall reach not
Heaven !
This doctrine I count right cruel and hard :
And when I am laid in the old churchyard
The habit of Francis I will not wear ;
Nor wear I his cord, or the cloth of hair
In secret. Men dwindle : till psalm and
prayer
Had soften'd the land, no Dane dwelt there !

X

I forgive old Cathbar who sank my boat :
Must I pardon Feargal who slew my son ?
Or the pirate, Strongbow, who burn'd Gra-
note,
They tell me, and in it nine priests, a
nun,
And, worst, Saint Finian's crosier staff ?
At forgiveness like that I spit and laugh !
My chief, in his wine-cups, forgave twelve
men ;
And of these a dozen rebell'd again !

THE BARD ETHELL

There never was chief more brave than he!

The night he was born Loch Dool up-
burst :

He was bard-loving, gift-making, loud o.
glee,

The last to fly, to advance the first.

He was like the top spray upon Uladh's oak,

He was like the tap-root of Argial's pine :

He was secret and sudden : as lightning his
stroke :

There was none that could fathom his hid
design !

He slept not : if any man scorn'd his alliance,

He struck the first blow for a frank defiance,

With that look on his face, half night, half
light,

Like the lake gust-blacken'd yet ridged with
white !

There were comely wonders before he died :

The eagle swoop'd, and the Banshee cried ;

The witch-elm wept with a blighted bud :

The spray of the torrent was red with
blood :

The chief, returned from the mountains bound

Forat to ask after Bran, his hound.

We knew he would die : three days passed
o'er ;

He died. We waked him for three days more.

One by one, upon brow and breast,

The whole clan kiss'd him. In peace may
he rest.

IRISH POEMS

XI

I sang his dirge. I could sing that time
Four thousand staves of ancestral rhyme :
To-day I can scarcely sing the half :
Of old I was corn, and now I am chaff !
My song to-day is a breeze that shakes
 Feebly the down on the cygnet's breast ;
'Twas then a billow the beach that rakes
 Or a storm that buffets the mountains'
 crest.
Whatever I bit with a venom'd song
 Grew sick, were it beast, or tree, or man :
The wrong'd one bade me avenge his
 wrong
 With the flail of the Satire and fierce Ode's
 fan.
I sang to the chieftains: each stock I
 traced
Lest lines should grow tangled through fraud
 or haste.
To princes I sang in a loftier tone
Of Moran the Just who refused a throne ;
Of Moran whose torque would close and
 choke
The wry-neck'd witness that falsely spoke.
I taught them how to win love and hate,
Not love from all, and to shun debate.
To maids in the bower I sang of love :
And of war at the feastings in hall or grove.

THE BARD ETHELL

XII

Great is our order ; but greater far
Were its pomp and its power in the days
of old,
When the five Chief Bards in peace or war
Had thirty bards each in his train en-
roll'd ;
When Ollave Fodhla in Tara's hall
Fed bards and kings : when the boy-king
Nial,
Was train'd by Torna : when Britain and
Gaul
Their laurel crowns sent to Dallan For-
gial.
To-day we can launch the clans into fight :
That day we could freeze them in mid
career !
Whatever man knows, was our realm by
right :
The lore without music no Gael would
hear.
Old Cormac, the brave, blind king was bard
Ere fame rose yet of O'Daly and Ward.
The son of Milesius was bard—" Go back,
My people," * he sang ; " ye have done a
wrong !

* This is the earliest record of Irish song. Its import has doubtless been faithfully preserved. It asserts those great principles of Truth and Justice, upon which alone national greatness can be founded.

IRISH POEMS

Nine waves go back o'er the green sea track ;
Let your foes their castles and coasts make
strong.
To the island ye came by stealth and at
night :
She is ours if we win her in all men's sight ! "
'Tis past ! some think that we err'd through
pride,
Though Columba the vengeance turned
aside.
Too strong we were not : too rich we were :
Give wealth to knaves : 'tis the true man's
snare !

XIII

But now men lie : they are just no more :
They forsake the old ways : they quest for
new ;
They pry and they snuff after strange false
lore
As dogs hunt vermin. It never was true :
I have scorn'd it for twenty years—this
babble
That eastward and southward a Saxon rabble
Have won great battles, and rule large lands,
And plight with daughters of ours their
hands !
We know the bold Norman o'erset their
throne
Long since ! Our lands ! Let them guard
their own !

THE BARD ETHELL

XIV

How long He leaves me—the great God—
here !

Have I sinn'd some sin, or has God forgotten ?

This year, I think, is my hundredth year :

I am like a bad apple, unripe yet rotten !
They shall lift me ere long, they shall lay me
—the clan—

By the strength of men on Mount Cruachan !
God has much to think of ! How much He
has seen

And how much is gone by that once has
been !

On sandy hills where the rabbits burrow

Are Rathes of Kings men name not now :

On mountain tops I have tracked the furrow

And found in forests the buried plough.

For one now living the strong land then

Gave kindly food and raiment to ten.

No doubt they wax'd proud and their God
defied ;

So their harvest He blighted or burned
their hoard ;

Or He sent them plague, or He sent the
sword ;

Or He sent them lightning ; and so they died
Like Dathi, the king, on the dark Alps' side.*

* Dathi, the last king of Pagan Ireland, perished, A.D. 428, on his march into Italy.

IRISH POEMS

xv

Alas me ! that man who is made of dust
Should have pride toward God ! 'Tis an
angel's sin !
I have often fear'd lest God, the All-just,
Should bend from heaven and sweep earth
clean,
Should sweep us all into corners and holes,
Like dust of the house-floor, both bodies and
souls !
I have often fear'd He would send some wind
In wrath ; and the nation wake up stone-
blind.
In age or in youth we have all wrought ill :
I say not our great King Nial did well
(Although he was Lord of the Pledges Nine)
When, beside subduing this land of Eire,
He raised in Armorica banner and sign,
And wasted the British coast with fire.
Perhaps in His mercy the Lord will say,
" These men ! God's help ! 'Twas a rough
boy play ! "
He is certain — that young Franciscan
priest—
God sees great sin where men see least :
Yet this were to give unto God the eye
(Unmeet the thought) of the humming fly !
I trust there are small things He scorns to
see
In the lowly who cry to Him piteously.

THE BARD ETHELL

Our hope is Christ. I have wept full oft
He came not to Eire in Oisín's time ;
Though love, and those new monks would
make men soft
If they were not harden'd by war and
rhyme.
I have done my part : my end draws nigh :
I shall leave old Eire with a smile and a
sigh :
She will miss not me as I miss'd my son :
Yet for her, and her praise, were my best
deeds done.
Man's deeds ! man's deeds ! they are shades
that fleet,
Or ripples like those that brake at my feet.
The deeds of my Chief and the deeds of my
King
Grow hazy, far seen, like the hills in spring.
Nothing is great save the death on the Cross !
But Pilate and Herod I hate, and know
Had Fionn lived then he had laid them
low
Though the world thereby had sustain'd
great loss.
My blindness and deafness and aching back
With meekness I bear for that suffering's
sake ;
And the Lent-fast for Mary's sake I love,
And the honour of Him, the Man above !
My songs are all over now : so best !
They are laid in the heavenly Singer's breast

IRISH POEMS

Who never sings but a star is born :
May we hear His song in the endless morn !
I give glory to God for our battles won
 By wood or river, or bay or creek :
For Norna, who died ; for my father, Conn ;
 For feasts, and the chase on the mountains
 bleak :
I bewail my sins, both unknown and known,
 And of those I have injured forgiveness
 seek.
The men that were wicked to me and mine
(Not quenching a wrong, nor in war nor
 wine) ;
I forgive and absolve them all, save three :
May Christ in His mercy be kind to me !

THE THREE WOES

THE THREE WOES

THAT angel whose charge is Eire sang thus,
o'er the dark isle winging :

By a virgin his song was heard at a tem-
pest's ruinous close :

"Three golden ages God gave while your
tender green blade was springing :
Faith's earliest harvest is reaped. To-day
God sends you three woes.

"For ages three, without laws ye shall flee
as beasts in the forest :

For an age, and a half age, faith shall bring
not peace but a sword :

Then laws shall rend you, like eagles, sharp-
fang'd, of your scourges the sorest :

When these three woes are past look up,
for your hope is restored.

"The times of your dole shall be twice the
time of your foregone glory :

But fourfold at last shall lie the grain on
your granary floor.

The seas in vapour shall fleet, and in ashes
the mountains hoary :

Let God do that which He wills. Let His
servants endure and adore !

THE DIRGE OF ATHUNREE

A.D. 1316

I

ATHUNREE! Athunree!
Erin's heart, it broke on thee!
Ne'er till then in all its woe
Did that heart its hope forego.
Save a little child—but one—
The latest regal race is gone.
Roderick died again on thee,
Athunree!

II

Athunree! Athunree!
A hundred years and forty-three
Winter-wing'd and black as night
O'er the land had track'd their flight:
In Clonmacnoise from earthy bed
Roderick raised once more his head:
Fedlim floodlike rush'd to thee,
Athunree!

III

Athunree! Athunree!
The light that struggled sank on thee
Ne'er since Cathall the red-handed
Such a host till then was banded.

THE DIRGE OF ATHUNREE

Long-hair'd Kerne and Galloglass
Met the Norman face to face ;
The saffron standard floated far
O'er the on-rolling wave of war ;
Bards the onset sang o'er thee,
Athunree !

IV

Athunree ! Athunree !
The poison tree took root in thee !
What might naked breasts avail
'Gainst sharp spear and steel-ribb'd mail ?
Of our princes twenty-nine,
Bulwarks fair of Connor's line,
Of our clansmen thousands ten
Slept on thy red ridges. Then—
Then the night came down on thee,
Athunree !

V

Athunree ! Athunree !
Strangely shone that moon on thee !
Like the lamp of them that tread
Staggering o'er the heaps of dead,
Seeking that they fear to see.
Oh, that widows' wailing sore !
On it rang to Oranmore ;
Died, they say, among the piles
That make holy Aran's isles ;
It was Erin wept on thee,
Athunree !

IRISH POEMS

VI

Athunree ! Athunree !
The heart of Erin burst on thee !
Since that hour some unseen hand
On her forehead stamps the brand :
Her children ate that hour the fruit
That slays manhood at the root ;
Our warriors are not what they were ;
Our maids no more are blithe and fair ;
Truth and honour died with thee,
Athunree !

VII

Athunree ! Athunree !
Never harvest wave o'er thee !
Never sweetly-breathing kine
Pant o'er golden meads of thine !
Barren be thou as the tomb ;
May the night-bird haunt thy gloom,
And the wailer from the sea,
Athunree !

VIII

Athunree ! Athunree !
All my heart is sore for thee,
It was Erin died on thee,
Athunree !

THE WEDDING OF THE CLANS

THE WEDDING OF THE CLANS

A GIRL'S BABBLE

I go to knit two clans together ;
Our clan and this new clan unseen of yore—
Our clan fears naught ! but I go, O whither?
This day I go from my mother's door.

Thou redbreast sing'st the old song over,
Though many a time thou hast sung it
before ;
They never sent thee to some strange new
lover :—
I sing a new song by my mother's door.

I stepp'd from my little room down by the
ladder,
The ladder that never so shook before ;
I was sad last night ; to-day I am sadder,
Because I go from my mother's door.

IRISH POEMS

The last snow melts upon bush and bramble ;
The gold bars shine on the forest's floor :
Shake not, thou leaf ! it is I must tremble
Because I go from my mother's door.

From a Spanish sailor a dagger I bought
me :
I trail'd a rose-tree our grey bawn o'er ;
The creed and my letters our old bard taught
me ;
My days were sweet at my mother's door.

My little white goat that with raised feet
huggest
The oak stock, thy horns in the ivies frore,
Could I wrestle like thee—how the wreaths
thou tuggest !
I never would move from my mother's
door.

Farewell, my wolf-hound, that slew Mac
Oming
As he caught me and far through the
thickets bore :
My heifer, Alb, in the green vale lowing,
My cygnet's nest upon Lorna's shore !

THE WEDDING OF THE CLANS

He has kill'd ten chiefs, this chief that plights
me :

His hand is like that of the giant Balor :
But I fear his kiss ; and his beard affrights
me.

And the great stone dragon above his door.

Had I daughters nine with me they should
tarry ;

They should sing old songs, they should
dance at my door ;

They should grind at the quern—no need to
marry ;

O when will this marriage-day be o'er ?

Had I buried, like Moirin, three mates al-
ready,

I might say, " Three husbands ! then why
not four ? "

But my hand is cold and my foot unsteady,
Because I never was married before !

THE STATUTE OF KILKENNY

Of old ye warr'd on men : to-day
On women and on babes ye war ;
The noble's child his head must lay
Beneath the peasant's roof no more !

I saw in sleep the infant's hand
His foster-brother's fiercely grasp ;
His warm arm, lithe as willow wand,
Twines me each day with closer clasp !

O infant smiler ! grief beguiler !
Between the oppressor and the oppress'd,
O soft unconscious reconciler,
Smile on, through thee the land is bless'd.

Through thee the puissant love the poor ;
His conqueror's hope the vanquish'd
shares :
For thy sake by a lowly door
The clan made vassal stops and stares.

THE STATUTE OF KILKENNY

Our vales are healthy. On thy cheek
There dawns, each day, a livelier red :
Smile on, before another week
Thy feet our earthen floor will tread.

Thy foster-brothers twain for thee
Would face the wolves on snowy fell :
Smile on ! the Irish enemy
Will fence their Norman nursling well.

The nursling as the child is dear ;—
Thy mother loves not like thy nurse !
That babbling mandate steps not near
Thy cot, but o'er her bleeding corse !

QUEEN MARGARET'S
FEASTING

A.D. 1451

[A singularly picturesque narrative of this event is given in an old Irish chronicle translated by Duaid Mac Ferbis, one of Ireland's "chief bards," for Sir James Ware, in the year 1666, and republished in the "Miscellany of the Irish Archæological Society," vol. I, 1846. The chronicler thus concludes: "God's blessing, the blessing of all the saints, and every one, blessing from Jerusalem to Inis Glaiire, be on her going to heaven ; and blessed be he who will reade and heare this for blessing her soul."]

I

FAIR she stood—God's queenly creature !
Wondrous joy was in her face ;
Of her ladies none in stature
Like to her, and none in grace.
On the church-roof stood they near her,
Cloth of gold was her attire ;
They in jewell'd circle wound her—
Beside her Ely's king, her sire.

QUEEN MARGARET'S FEASTING

II

Far and near the green fields glitter'd
Like to poppy-beds in spring,
Gay with companies loose-scatter'd
Seated each in seemly ring.
Under banners red or yellow :
There all day the feast they kept
From chill dawn and noontide mellow
Till the hill-shades eastward crept.

III

On a white steed at the gateway
Margaret's husband, Calwagh, sate :
Guest on guest, approaching, straightway
Welcomed he with love and state.
Each pass'd on with largess laden,
Chosen gifts of thought and work,
Now the red cloak of the maiden,
Now the minstrel's golden torque.

IV

On the wind the tapestries shifted ;
From the blue hills rang the horn ;
Slowly toward the sunset drifted
Choral song and shout breeze-borne.
Like a sea the crowds unresting
Murmur'd round the grey church-tower ;
Many a prayer amid the feasting,
For Margaret's mother rose that hour !

IRISH POEMS

V

On the church-roof kerne and noble
At her bright face look'd, half-dazed ;
Nought was hers of shame or trouble—
On the crowds far off she gazed :
Once, on heaven her dark eyes bending,
Her hands in prayers she flung apart
Unconsciously her arms extending,
She bless'd her people in her heart.

VI

Thus a Gaelic queen and nation
At Imayn till set of sun
Kept with feast the Annunciation,
Fourteen hundred fifty-one.
Time it was of solace tender ;
'Twas a brave time, strong yet fair !
Blessing, O ye angels, send her
From Salem's towers, and Inisglairé !

DIRGE OF OWEN O'NEILL

DIRGE OF OWEN O'NEILL

A.D. 1649

So, 'tis over ! Lift the dead
Bear him to his place of rest,
Broken heart, and blighted head :
Lay the cross upon his breast.

There be many die too late ;
Here is one that died too soon ;
'Twas not fortune—it was fate
After him that cast her shoon.

Toll the church-bells slowly : toll !
God this day is wrath with Eire :
Seal the book, and fold the scroll ;
Break the harp, and burst the wire.

Lords and priests, ye talked and talked
In Kilkenny's council hall ;
But this man whose game ye baulked
Was the one man 'mong you all.

'Twas not in the field he fell !
Sing his requiem, dark-stoled choir !
Let a nation sound his knell :
God this day is wrath with Eire !

ROISIN DUBH *

I

O WHO art thou with that queenly brow
And uncrown'd head ?
And why is the vest that binds thy breast,
O'er the heart, blood-red ?
Like a rose-bud in June was that spot at
noon,
A rose-bud weak ;
But it deepens and grows like a July rose :
Death-pale thy cheek !

II

"The babes I fed at my foot lay dead ;
I saw them die :
In Ramah a blast went wailing past ;
It was Rachel's cry.
But I stand sublime on the shores of Time,
And I pour mine ode,
As Miriam sang to the cymbals' clang,
On the wind to God.

* Roisin Dubh signifies the "Black Little Rose," and was one of the mystical names under which the bards celebrated Ireland.

ROISIN DUBH

III

"Once more at my feasts my bards and
priests

Shall sit and eat :

And the Shepherd whose sheep are on
every steep

Shall bless my meat !

Oh, sweet, men say, is the song by day,

And the feast by night ;

But on poison I thrive, and in death survive

Through ghostly might."

THE BISHOP OF ROSS

THEY led him to the peopled wall.
"Thy sons," they said, "are those within !
If at thy word their standards fall
Thy life and freedom thou shalt win !"

Then spake that warrior bishop old :
"Remove these chains that I may bear
My crozier staff and stole of gold :
My judgement then I will declare."

They robed him in his robes of state :
They set the mitre on his head :
On tower and gate was silence great :
The hearts that loved him froze with dread.

He spake : "Right holy is your strife !
Fight for your country, king * and faith :
I taught you to be true in life :
I teach you to be true in death.

"A priest apart by God is set
To offer prayer and sacrifice :
And he is sacrificial yet
The pontiff for his flock who dies."

* Charles I.

IN RUIN RECONCILED

Ere yet he fell, his hand on high
He raised, and benediction gave ;
Then sank in death, content to die :—
Thy great heart, Erin, was his grave.



IN RUIN RECONCILED

I HEARD a woman's voice that wailed
Between the sand hills and the sea :
The famished sea-bird past me sailed
Into the dim infinity.

I stood on boundless, rainy moors :
Far off I saw a great rock loom ;
The grey dawn smote its iron doors ;
And then I knew it was a tomb.

Two queenly shapes before the grate
Watched, couchant on the barren ground ;
Two regal shades in ruined state,
One Gael, one Norman ; both discrowned.

A BALLAD OF SARSFIELD

OR, THE BURSTING OF THE GUNS (A.D. 1690)

SARSFIELD went out the Dutch to rout,
And to take and break their cannon ;
To Mass went he at half-past three,
And at four he cross'd the Shannon.

Tirconnel slept. In dreams his thoughts
Old fields of victory ran on ;
And the chieftains of Thomond in Limerick's
towers
Slept well by the banks of the Shannon.

He rode ten miles and he cross'd the ford,
And couch'd in the wood and waited ;
Till, left and right, on marched in sight
That host which the true men hated.

"Charge !" Sarsfield cried ; and the green
hillside
As they charged replied in thunder ;
They rode o'er the plain and they rode o'er
the slain,
And the rebel rout lay under !

A BALLAD OF SARSFIELD

He burn'd the gear the knaves held dear,
For his king he fought, not plunder ;
With powder he cramm'd the guns and
ramm'd
Their mouths the red soil under.

The spark flash'd out—like a nation's shout
The sound into heaven ascended ;
The hosts of the sky made to heaven reply,
And the thunders twain were blended !

Sarsfield went out the Dutch to rout,
And to take and break their cannon ;
A century after, Sarsfield's laughter *
Was echoed from Dungannon.

* It was in the parish church of Dungannon that the Volunteers of 1782 proclaimed the constitutional independence of the Irish Parliament.

SONG

THE little black rose shall be red at last !
What made it black but the East wind dry,
And the tear of the widow that fell on it fast ?
It shall redden the hills when June is nigh !

The silk of the kine shall rest at last !
What drove her forth but the dragon-fly ?
In the golden vale she shall feed full fast
With her mild gold horn, and her slow
dark eye.

The wounded wood-dove lies dead at last :
The pine long-bleeding, it shall not die !
This song is secret. Mine ear it pass'd
In a wind o'er the stone plain of Athenry.

REPEAL OF THE PENAL LAWS

ODE ON THE FIRST REPEAL OF THE PENAL LAWS

A.D. 1778

THE hour has struck ! at last in heaven
The golden shield an angel smites !
On Erin's altars thunder-riven
A happier destiny alights.
'Tis done that cannot be undone,
The lordlier ages have begun ;
The flood that widens as it flows
Is loosed ; fulfilled the triple woes !

Once more the Faith uplifts her forehead,
Star-circled, to the starry skies :
Fangless at last, a snake abhorred,
Beneath her foot oppression lies :
Above the waning moon of time
The apparition stands sublime,
From hands immaculate, hands of light,
Down scattering gifts of saintly might.

Long for her martyrs Erin waited :
They came at last. Rejoice this hour,
Ye tonsured heads, or consecrated,
That sank beneath the stony shower !
Thou land for centuries dark and dumb
Arise and shine ! thy light is come !
Return ; for they are dead their knife
Who raised, and sought the young child's life.

IRISH POEMS

Again the wells of ancient knowledge
Shall cheer the thirsty lip and dry :
Again waste places, fane and college,
The radiance wear of days gone by !
Once more shall rise the minster porch ;
Once more shall laugh the village church
O'er plains that yield the autumnal feast
Once more to industry released !

Once more the far sea-tide returneth
And feeds the rivers of the land :
Once more her heart maternal yearneth
With hopes the growth of memories
grand.
Immortal longings swell her breast,
Quickened from dust of saints at rest :
Once more six centuries bud and flower
To share the triumph of this hour !

Who was it called thee the forsaken ?
A consort judged ? a wife put by ?
He at whose nod the heavens are shaken,
'Tis He who hails thee from on high.
" I loved thee from of old : I saved :
Upon My palms thy name is graved :
With blood were sealed the bridal vows ;
For lo, thy Maker is thy spouse ! "

REPEAL OF THE PENAL LAWS

Who, who are those like clouds of morning,
That sail to thee o'er seas of gold?
That fly, like doves, their exile scorning,
To windows known and loved of old?
To thee the isles their hands shall raise;
Thy sons have taught them songs of praise;
And kings rebuild thy wall, or wait
Beside thy never-closing gate.

As from the fig-tree, tempest-wasted
The untimely fruitage falleth crude,
So dropp'd around thee, blighted, blasted,
Age after age, thy sentenced brood.
To thee this day thine own are given:
Yet what are these to thine in heaven?
They left thee in thy years of pain:
Thy cause they pleaded—not in vain.

Those years are o'er: made soft by distance,
Old wars like war-songs soon will seem,
The aggression dire, the wild resistance,
Put on the moonlight of a dream.
Ah, gentle foes! If wholly past—
That Norman foe was friend at last!
Like him, the ill deed redress, recall—
In Erin's heart is room for all.

THE YEAR OF SORROW

A.D. 1846-7

WINTER

FALL, snow, and cease not ! Flake by flake
The decent winding sheet compose :
Thy task is just and pious ; make
An end of blasphemies and woes.

Fall flake by flake ! by thee alone
Last friend, the sleeping draught is given :
Kind nurse, by thee the couch is strewn,
The couch whose covering is from heaven.

Descend and clasp the mountain's crest ;
Inherit plain and valley deep :
This night on thy maternal breast
A vanquished nation dies in sleep.

Lo ! from the starry temple gates
Death rides and bears the flag of peace ;
The combatants he separates ;
He bids the wrath of ages cease.

THE YEAR OF SORROW

Descend, benignant power ! But O
Ye torrents, shake no more the vale,
Dark streams in silence onward flow :
Thou rising storm, remit thy wail.

Shake not, to-night, the cliffs of Moher,
Nor Brandon's base, rough sea ! Thou
Isle,
The rite proceeds ! From shore to shore
Hold in thy gathered breath the while.

Fall, snow, in stillness fall, like dew
On church's roof and cedar's fan ;
And mould thyself on pine and yew
And on the awful face of man.

Without a sound, without a stir,
In streets and wolds, on rock and mound,
O omnipresent Comforter,
By thee this night the lost are found !

On quaking moor, and mountain moss,
With eyes uplifted to the sky
And arms extended like a cross,
The long expectant sufferers lie.

IRISH POEMS

Bend o'er them, white-robed acolyte !
Put forth thy hand from cloud and mist !
And minister the last sad rite,
Where altar there is none nor priest.

Touch thou the gates of soul and sense ;
Touch darkening eyes and dying ears ;
Touch stiffening hands and feet, and thence
Remove the trace of sins and tears.

And ere thou seal those filmèd eyes
Into God's urn thy fingers dip,
And lay, 'mid eucharistic sighs,
The sacred wafer on the lip.

This night th' Absolver issues forth ;
This night th' eternal Victim bleeds ;
O winds and woods ! O heaven and earth
Be still this night. The rite proceeds !

THE MUSIC OF THE FUTURE

HARK, hark that chime ! The frosts are o'er !

With song the birds force on the spring :

Thus, Ireland, sang thy bards of yore :

O younger bards, 'tis time to sing !

Your country's smile, that with the past

Lay dead so long—that vanished smile.

Evoke it from the dark and cast

Its light around a tearful isle !

Like severed locks that keep their light

When all the stately frame is dust

A nation's songs preserve from blight

A nation's name, their sacred trust.

Temple and pyramid eterne

May memorize her deeds of power ;

But only from the songs we learn

How throbbed her life-blood hour by hour.

Thrice blest the strain that brings to one

Who weeps by some Australian rill,

A worn-out life far off begun,

His country's countenance beauteous still !

That 'mid Canadian's wilds, or where

Rich-feathered birds are void of song,

Wafts back, 'mid gusts of Irish air

Old wood-notes loved and lost so long !

IRISH POEMS

Well might the muse at times forsake
Her Grecian hill, and sit where swerve,
In lines like those of Hebé's neck,
That wood-girt bay, yon meadow's curve,
Watching the primrose clusters throw
Their wan light o'er that ivied cave,
And airs by myrtles odoured blow,
The apple blossom on the wave !

Thrice blest the strain that, when the May
Allures the young leaf from the bud,
When robins, thrushlike, shake the spray
And deepening purples tinge the flood,
Kindles new worlds of love and truth,
This world's lost Eden, still new-born,
In breast of Irish maid or youth
Reading beneath the Irish thorn :

That wins from over-heated strife
Blinded ambition's tool ; that o'er
The fields of unsabbatic life
The church-bells of the past can pour,
Around the old oak lightning-scarred
Can raise the untainted woods that rang
When, throned 'mid listening kerns, the bard
Of Oisín and of Patrick sang.

Saturnian years return ! Ere long
Peace, justice-built, the isle shall cheer :
Even now old sounds of ancient wrong
At distance roll, but come not near :

THE MUSIC OF THE FUTURE

Past is the iron age—the storms
That lashed the worn cliff, shock on shock ;
The bird in tempest cradled warms
At last her wings upon the rock.

How many a bard may lurk even now,
Ireland, among thy noble poor !
To Truth their genius let them vow,
Scorn the bad Siren's tinsel lure ;
Faithful to illustrate God's word
On nature's writ ; or re-revealing,
Through nature, Christian lore transferred
From faith to sight by songs heart-healing.

Fair land ! the skill was thine of old
Upon the illumined scroll to trace
In heavenly blazon blue or gold
The martyr's palm, the angel's face ;
One day on every Muse's page,
Be thine a saintly light to fling,
And bathe the world's declining age
Once more in its baptismal spring !

Man sows : a hand divine must reap :
The toil wins most that wins not praise :
Stones buried in oblivion's deep
May help the destined pile to raise,
Foundations fix for pier or arch ;
Above that spirit-bridge's span
To faith's inviolate home may march,
In God's good time, enfranchised man.

EPILOGUE

WITH spices and urns they come : ah me,
how sorrows can babble !

Nothing abides save love ; and to love
comes gladness at last :

Sad was the Legend and sweet ; but its truth
was mingled with fable ;

Dire was the conflict and long ; but the
rage of the conflict is past.

They are passed, the three great Woes ; and
the days of the dread desolation ;

To amethyst changed are the stones blood-
stain'd of the temple-floor ;

A spiritual power she lives who seem'd to die
as a nation ;

Her story is that of a soul ; and the story
of earth is no more.

Endurance it was that won—Suffering, than
Action thrice greater ;

For Suffering humbly *acts*. Away with
sigh and with tear !

She has gone before you and waits : she has
gifts for the blinded who hate her ;

And the bright shape by the death-cave in
music answers, " Not here."

HUMAN LIFE

Sonnets

HUMAN LIFE

SAD is our youth, for it is ever going,
 Crumbling away beneath our very feet ;
Sad is our life, for onward it is flowing,
 In current unperceived because so fleet ;
Sad are our hopes, for they were sweet in
 sowing,
 But tares, self sown, have overtopped the
 wheat ;
Sad are our joys, for they were sweet in blowing,
 And still, O still, their dying breath is
 sweet :
And sweet is youth, although it hath bereft
 us
 Of that which made our childhood sweeter
 still ;
And sweet our life's decline, for it hath left
 us
 A newer good to cure an older ill ;
And sweet are all things, when we learn to
 prize them
 Not for their sake, but His who grants
 them or denies them.

SORROW

COUNT each affliction, whether light or
grave,
God's messenger sent down to thee ; do
thou
With courtesy receive him ; rise and bow ;
And, ere his shadow pass thy threshold,
crave
Permission first his heavenly feet to lave ;
Then lay before him all thou hast : allow
No cloud of passion to usurp thy brow,
Or mar thy hospitality ; no wave
Of mortal tumult to obliterate
The soul's marmoreal calmness. Grief should
be,
Like joy, majestic, equable, sedate ;
Confirming, cleansing, raising, making free ;
Strong to consume small troubles ; to
commend
Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts
lasting to the end.

GOD'S GIFTS

GOD'S GIFTS

LOVE to the tender ; peace to those who
mourn ;

Hope to the hopeless, hope that does not
fail,

Whose symbol is the anchor, not the sail ;
Glory that spreads to heaven's remotest
bourn,

And to its centre doth again return

Like music ; health revisiting the frail ;

Freedom to those who pine in dungeons
pale ;

Sorrows which God hath willed and Christ
hath worn !

Omnipotence to be the poor man's shield ;

Light, uncreated light, to cheer the blind ;

Infinite mercy sent to heal and bind

All wounds encountered in life's well-fought
field ;

These are God's gifts to man—nor these
alone :

Himself He gives to all who make those
gifts their own.

SONNETS

LAW AND GRACE

YES, I remember : once beneath a yoke
We walked, with jealous pride and painful
fear :

Then a stern footstep sounded ever near ;
And, when that Presence dread His silence
broke,

Austere and cold as if a statue spoke,
Each marble sentence smote upon my
ear ;

Yet "Thou shalt not," was all that I could
hear—

Then sudden from its trance my spirit woke.
The sun was shining. Floods of light
divine,

Golden and crimson on the mountains
played.

I saw the village spire like silver shine :
Æolian music filled the echoing shade :
And I could hear, through all the mur-
muring glen,
Music of moving Gods come down to live
with men.

EVIDENCES OF RELIGION

EVIDENCES OF RELIGION

YE who build the Churches of the Lord !
See that ye make the western porches
low : *

Let no one enter who disdains to bow.
High Truths profanely gazed at, unadored,
Will be abused at first, at last abhorred ;
And many a learned, many a lofty brow
Hath rested, pillowed on a humbler vow
Than critic ken can notice or record.
O stainless peace of blest Humility !
Of all who fain would enter, few, alas !
Catch the true meaning of that kind, sad
eye ;
While thou, God's portress, stationed by His
door,
Dost stretch thy cross so near the marble
floor
That children only, without bending, pass.

* An ancient custom.

TRUE AND FALSE LOVE OF
FREEDOM

THEY that for freedom feel not love but lust,
 Irreverent, knowing not her spiritual claim,
 And they, the votaries blind of windy fame,
 And they who cry, "I will because I must";
 They too that launch, screened by her shield
 august,
 A bandit's shaft, some private mark their
 aim;
 And they that make her sacred cause their
 game,
 From restlessness or spleen or sheer disgust
 At duteous days—all these, the brood of
 night,
 Diverse, by one black note detected stand,
 Their scorn of every barrier raised by right
 To awe self-will. Howe'er by virtue banned,
 By reason spurned, that act the moment
 needs
 Licensed they deem; holy whate'er succeeds.

NATIONAL STRENGTH

WHAT is it makes a nation truly great ?

Her sons, her sons alone ; not theirs, but
they

Glory and gold are vile as wind and clay
Unless the hands that grasp them, consecrate.
And what is that in man by which a State

Is clad in splendour like the noontide day ?

Virtue : Dominion ebbs, and Arts betray ;
Virtue alone endures. But what is that
Which Virtue's self doth rest on ; that which
yields her

Light for her feet, and daily, heavenly bread ;
Which from demoniac pride and madness
shields her,

And storms that most assail the loftiest head ?
The Christian's humble faith ; that faith
which cheers

The orphan's quivering heart and stays the
widow's tears.

TO HONOUR

BRIGHT and majestic spirit ! faithful mate
Of all true virtue, and that generous fame
Which guards a spotless, seeks a glorious
name
From love, not pride ; but seeks, content to
wait,
And prompt to share it—Angel of the State !
Sanctioning order with religious awe ;
Taking the harshness and the sting from
law,
Scorn from the lowly, envy from the great—
Come to this region of thine ancient sway !
With thine heroic and inspiring smile
Illume our perils and our fears beguile !
Was it not here that Alfred built his
throne,
And high-souled Sidney waived a throne
away ?
The land is strong which thou hast made
thine own.

LOYALTY

LOYALTY

ONE virtue reigned supreme in days gone
by,

Familiarly beloved, with awe obeyed :
The name survives amongst us—Loyalty :
By her all natural ties were virtues made :
All virtues (humble when their queen stood
nigh)

Unsunned remained, and pure, beneath
the shade.

Without her now, they strut in masquerade,
Vainglorious pageants for the public eye ;
Sans-foy ! Sans-loy ! Sans-joy ! the patron
saints

Whom every modern warrior on his casque
Blazons, each scribe on his phylactery !

How will ye better help a land that faints
With hunger, long and vainly do I ask,
Than ancient Faith, or Hope, or Charity ?

JOAN OF ARC

O ROYAL-HEARTED peasant-maid of France
Whom that "still voice" which those alone
can hear
Who walk in innocence and void of fear,
To war-fields called from rural toils or dance;
Whom God's great saints, revealed to thee
in trance,
For knightly onset girt with shield and
spear,
Thy task a Christian throne from dust to
rear
And work a Christian realm's deliverance;
O thou that charioted by martyr-fires
Rod'st to thy God that task fulfilled, this day
A deeper need a saintlier aid requires;
Invaders worse possess thy France, their
prey
This hour suffice not crown restored, or
chrism:
Her foes within: thy prayers are exorcism.

THE SPANISH ARMADA AND
THE ENGLISH CATHOLICS

A SPANISH fleet affront our English shores !

It must not be ; it shall not ! Sink or
swim

Our cause, our lamp of hope burn bright
or dim,

Long as o'er English cliffs the osprey soars,

Long as on English coasts the breaker roars,

No alien flag shall scale our blue sea-rim,

No smoke from Spanish gun our skies be-
dim,

No foot from Parma stain our household
floors !

Fair sirs, we question not your true intent,
To prop true faith, and queens in wedlock
born :

But foreign aid, and arms, and arts we
scorn :

To native hearts and hands we trust the
event :

The right is ours ; with God the arbitra-
ment :

At worst, beyond *His* night remains *His*
morn !

THE "MISERERE" IN THE
SISTINE CHAPEL

I .

FROM sadness on to sadness, woe to woe,
Searching all depths of grief ineffable,
Those sighs of the Forsaken sink and swell,
And to a piercing shrillness, gathering, grow.
Now one by one, commingling now they flow:
Now in the dark they die, a piteous knell,
Lorn as the wail of exiled Israel,
Or Hagar weeping o'er her outcast. No—
Never hath loss external forced such sighs !
O ye with secret sins that inly bleed,
And drift from God, search out, if ye are wise,
Your unrepented infelicities :
And pray, whate'er the punishment decreed,
It prove not exile from your Maker's eyes.

THE "MISERERE"

II

Those sounds expiring on mine ear, mine
eye
Was by their visual reflex strangely spelled ;
A vision of the angels who rebelled
Still hung before me, through the yielding
sky
Sinking on plumes outstretched imploringly ;
Their tempter's hopes and theirs for ever
quelled.
They sank, with hands upon their eyes close
held,
And longed, methought, for death, yet could
not die ;
Down, ever down, a mournful pageant
streaming
With the slow, ceaseless motion of a river,
Inwoven choirs to ruin blindly tending,
They sank. I wept as one who weeps while
dreaming
To see them, host on host, by doom de-
scending
Down the dim gulfs, for ever and for ever.

TO A JUST LAWYER

I

DEFRAUDED Justice, long a wanderer driven
From law, her temple, holy kept of old,
Though now the money-changers' strongest
hold,
Invoked not vainly aid from thee: and
heaven
To thee that voice heroical hath given
Wherewith to all thy brethren thou hast
called,
Standing alone among them disenthralled,
All chains of custom, fear, and interest riven.
Young priest of justice, what was their reply?
"Justice herself this human sacrifice
Requires: if thou would'st serve her, rob
and lie,
So keep the State function, and equipoise,"—
Such answer thou didst scorn; and hast for
this
Attained, fully to see its utter hollowness.

TO A JUST LAWYER

TO A JUST LAWYER

II

Blessed is he who hath not trod the ways
Of secular delights, nor learned the lore
Which loftier minds are studious to abhor :
Blessed is he who hath not sought the praise
That perishes, the rapture that betrays ;
Who hath not spent in Time's vainglorious

war

His youth ; and found, a schoolboy at four-
score,

How fatal are those victories which raise
Their iron trophies to a temple's height
On trampled Justice, who desires not bliss,
But peace ; and yet when summoned to the
fight,

Combats as one who combats in the sight
Of God and of His angels, seeking this
Alone, how best to glorify the right.

THE DYING PLATONIST

FAIN would I call that night which spreads
so fast

Out of the vault of death's abysmal skies,
A gentle gloom like that of thy dark eyes:
Fain would I say that we, like children, cast
Our blindfold faces with a timid haste
Into a mother's lap—ere long to rise
Some little forfeit and some sweet surprise,
The playful future of a playful past.
But ah! it is not so. Reality
Makes a dread language of this ebbing
breath;

Preaching those awful homilies of death
Which sound so like each other at their close.
The least of sins is infinite: it throws
A shade into the face of the Most High.

THE CONSTELLATION OF THE PLOUGH

THE CONSTELLATION OF THE PLOUGH

TYPE of celestial labour, toil divine,
That nightly downward from the glistening
 skies

Showerest thy light on these expectant eyes,
Around thee in their station ever shine

Full many a radiant shape and emblemed
 sign,

Swords, sceptres, crowns, bright tresses, ga-
 laxies—

Whatever song can raise, or thought devise,
Yet none, methinks, so truly great as thine.

On, ever on ! while he who guides thee flings
His golden grain along the azure way,

Do thou thy sleepless work, and toiling, say,
“ O men, so sedulous in trivial things,

Why faint amid your loftier labours ? Why
Forget the starry seeds and harvests of the
 sky ? ”

MAN'S MIND SHOULD BE OF
MARBLE

Man's mind should be of marble, not of clay :
A rock-hewn temple, large, majestic, bare ;
Not decked with gewgaws, but with life-long
care

And toil heroic shaped to stand for aye :
Not like those plaster baubles of the day,
In which the lightest breath of praise or
prayer

Crumbles the gauds wherewith they gar-
nished are :

In which we dare not think, and cannot pray ;
In which God will not dwell. O Constancy !
Where thou art wanting all our gifts are
naught !

Friend of the martyrs—both of those who die
And those who live—beneath that steadfast
eye

The breast-plates and the beaming helms
were wrought
Of all our far-famed Christian chivalry !

TO HIS FATHER'S MEMORY

Memorial Sonnets

TO HIS FATHER'S MEMORY

I

At times I lift mine eyes unto "the hills
Whence my salvation cometh"—aye, and
higher—

And, the mind kindling with the heart's
desire,
Mount to that realm nor blight nor shadow
chills :

With concourse of bright forms that region
thrills :

I see the lost one midmost in the choir :
From heaven to heaven, on wings that
ne'er can tire,

I soar ; and God Himself my spirit fills.

If that high rapture lasted, need were none

For aid beside, nor any meaner light,
Nothing henceforth to seek, and nought to
shun :

But my soul staggers at its noonday height
And, stretching forth blind hands, a shape
undone,

Drops back into the gulfs of mortal night.

August 6, 1846.

SONNETS

II

Then learn I that the fancy's saintliest flight
Gives or a fleeting, or a false relief ;
And fold my hands and say " Let grief be
grief,
Let winter winter be, and blight be blight ! "
O Thou all wise, all-just and infinite !
Whate'er the good we clasped, the least,
the chief,
Was Thine, not ours, and held by us in fief ;
Thy Will consummate in my will's despite !
" Blessed the dead " : and they, they too, are
blest
Who, dead on earth, in full submission find,
Buried in God's high will, their Maker's rest :
Kneeling, the blood-drops from the Sa-
viour's feet
Their brows affusing, makes their passion
sweet ;
And in His sepulchre they sleep enshrined.
August 6, 1846.

TO HIS FATHER'S MEMORY

III

Alone, among thy books, once more I sit ;
No sound there stirs except the flapping
fire ;
Strange shadows of old times about me flit
As sinks the midnight lamp or flickers
higher.
I see thee pace the room. With eye thought-
lit
Back, back, thou com'st once more to my
desire :
Low-toned thou read'st once more the verse
new-writ,
Too deep, too pure for worldlings to
admire.
That brow all honour, that all gracious hand,
That cordial smile, and clear voice musical,
That noble bearing, mien of high command,
Yet void of pride—to-night I have them
all.
Ah, phantoms vain of thought ! The Christ-
mas air
Is white with flying flakes. Where art thou
—where ?

Christmas, 1860.

SONNETS

CARDINAL NEWMAN

THY ninety years on earth have passed
away :

At last thou restest 'mid that heavenly
clime

Where Act is Rest, and Age perpetual
prime :

Thy noblest, holiest work begins this day,
Begins, not ends ! Best Work is Prayer ;
and they

Who plead, absolved from bonds of Space
and Time,

With lordliest labour work that work sub-
lime,

Order our planet with benignest sway.

So work, great Spirit ! Thy toils foregone
each year

Bear fruit on earth ! Thousands but praise
thee now :

Those laureates soon will bend a brighten-
ing brow

O'er tomes of thine ; on each may drop a
tear

For friends that o'er blind oceans pushed
their prow

Self-cheated of a guiding light so clear.

CARDINAL MANNING

LAVINGTON AND ROME

I LEARNED his greatness first at Lavington :
The moon had early sought her bed of
 brine,
But we discoursed till now each starry sign
Had sunk : our theme was one and one
 alone :
"Two minds supreme," he said, "our earth
 has known ;
One sang in science ; one served God in
 song ;
Aquinas — Dante." Slowly in me grew
 strong
A thought, "These two great minds in him
 are one ;
'Lord, what shall this man do?'" Later in
 Rome,
Beside the dust of Peter and of Paul,
Eight hundred mitred sires of Christendom
In Council sat. I marked him 'mid them
 all ;
I thought of that long night in years gone
 by,
And cried, "At last my question meets
 reply."

SONNETS

TENNYSON

NONE sang of love more nobly ; few as
well ;
Of friendship none with pathos so profound ;
Of duty sternliest-proved when myrtle-crowned ;
Of English grove and rivulet, mead and dell ;
Great Arthur's Legend he alone dared tell ;
Milton and Dryden feared to tread that
ground ;
For him alone o'er Camelot's faery bound
The " horns of Elf-land " blew their magic
spell.
Since Shakespeare and since Wordsworth
none hath sung
So well his England's greatness ; none
hath given
Reproof more fearless or advice more sage :
None inlier taught how near to earth is
Heaven ;
With what vast concords Nature's harp is
strung ;
How base false pride ; faction's fanatic
rage.

FATHER DAMIEN

I

LIVES there not, still replaced as time goes
by,

Some man who wears the wide earth's
crown of woe,

Pain's Victim-Priest, a shadow cast below
By Him that Victim-Priest enthroned on
high ?

Mounts not that man elect his Calvary
Like Christ by choice not doom ? If this
be so

The world's blind prophets ill the graces
know

Men reap from that perennial agony !
Damien ! no name like thine exalts old
story !

Dread Leper-Saint, pray well for me and
mine,
Both here and harboured in the eternal
glory ;

For this is sure—that living woes like
thine

Are knit so closely with Christ's Death
divine

They draw from it some power expiatory.

SONNETS

II

Thy greatness is *our* vaunt ; vainglorious
thought
To thee finds access never : that is well !
The Spirits that whisper round thy mid-
night cell
Waft thee a dew of purer solace fraught
With Eden's sweetness only—solace caught
From bowers where love and meekness
blended dwell,
And whence not boasts but songs thanks-
giving swell—
Love-songs of martyr souls. This fight well
fought
Thy death will crown ; thy greatness then
beknown :
Who then shall lead thee to thy paradise ?
Those saints who best true joy, true beauty
see
When hid by mists of earth—Cecilia, she
Whose bridal wreath angels discerned
alone,
And Agnes angel-veiled from fleshly eyes.

SIR JOHN SIMEON

IN MEMORY OF SIR JOHN
SIMEON

Feast of the Purification, 1873

I

THIS day we keep our Candlemas in snow :
 Wan is the sky : a bitter wind and drear
 Wrinkles the bosom of yon blackening
 mere :
Of these I reckon not, but of thee, and O !
Of that bright Roman morn, so long ago,
 When, children new of her, that Church
 more dear
 To liegeful hearts with each injurious
 year,
We watched the famed procession circling
 slow.
Once more I see it wind with lights up-
 holden
 On through the Sistine, on and far away :
Once more I mark beneath its radiance
 golden
 Thy forehead shine, and, with it kindling,
 say,
“ Rehearsals dim were those, O friend : this
 hour
Surely God's light it is that on thee rests in
 power ! ”

SONNETS

II

Again we met. We trod the fields and farms
Of that fair isle, thy happy English home ;
We gazed upon blue sea, and snowy foam
Clipt in the jutting headland's woody arms :
The year had reached the fulness of her
charms :

The Church's year, from strength to
strength increased,
Its zenith held, that great Assumption feast
Whose sun with annual joy the whole earth
warms,
That day how swiftly rushed from thy full
heart

Hope's glorying flood ! How high thy
fancy soared,
Kenning, though far, once more thine Eng-
land's crest

A light to Christendom's old heaven re-
stored !
" In a large room " thy heart its home had
found :
The land we trod that day to thee was holy
ground.

III

The world external knew thee but in part :
It saw and honoured what was least in
thee ;

The loyal trust, the inborn courtesy ;
The ways so winning, yet so pure from art ;
The cordial reverence, keen to all desert,
All save thine own ; the accost so frank
and free ;

The public zeal that toiled, but not for
fee,
And shunned alike base praise and hireling's
mart :

These things men saw ; but deeper far than
these

The under-current of thy soul worked on
Unvexed by surface-ripple, beam, or breeze,
And unbeheld its way to ocean won :
Life of thy life was still that Christian faith
The sophist scorns. It failed thee not in
death.

ROBERT ISAAC WILBERFORCE

"No way but this." There where the pleasant shade

Dropped from the ledges of the Alban hill
Creeps to the vast Campagna and is still,
The mightier shadow reached him ! Prayer
was made :

But he to God his tribute just has paid,
And earned his rest. The deep recalled
the rill :

A long life's labour with a perfect will
He on the altar of the Church had laid.
Child of the old English learning sage and
pure,

Authentic, manly, grave, without pretence,
From this poor stage of changeful time
and sense

Released, sleep well, of thy reward secure :
Beside the apostles' threshold thou dost
lie,

Waiting, well pleased, thy great eternity.

Rome, 1857.

Miscellaneous Poems

A CHRISTIAN POETESS

ADELAIDE PROCTER

SHE stooped o'er earth's poor brink, light as
a breeze

That bathes, enraptured, in clear morning
seas,

And round her, like that wandering minstrel,
sent

Twofold delight — music with freshness
blent :

Ere long in night her snowy wings she furl'd,

Waiting the sunrise of a happier world,

And God's new song. O spirit crystalline,

What lips shall better waft it on than thine ?

IN MEMORY OF EDWIN, EARL
OF DUNRAVEN

ONCE more I pace thy pillared halls,
And hear the organ echoes sigh
In blissful death on storied walls :
But where art thou ? not here ; nor nigh.

Once more the rapt spring-breezes send
A flash o'er yonder winding flood,
And with the garden's fragrance blend
A fresher breath from lawn and wood.

Friend ! where art thou ? Thy works reply ;
The lowly school ; the high-arched fane :
Who loves his kind can never die :
Who serves his God, with God shall reign.

Adare, 1873.

EPITAPH

EPITAPH

GREAT love, death-humbled, yields awhile
to earth

Its bright one, waiting there the immortal
birth :

Rich love, made poor, can trust one hope
alone,

Its best, its holiest, to the cold grave-stone :

Eternal Easter of that hope, be born !

The pure make perfect ; comfort the forlorn.

AN EPITAPH

AN EPITAPH WITHOUT A NAME

I HAD a name. A wreath of woven air,
A wreath of letters blended, none knew
why,
Floated, a vocal phantom, here and there,
For one brief season, like the dragon-fly
That flecks the noontide beam
Flickering o'er downward, forest-darkened
stream
What word those letters shaped, I tell you
not :
Wherefore should such this maiden marble
blot ?
Faint echo, last and least, of foolish fame,
I am a soul ; nor care to have a name.

AGE

OLD age ! The sound is harsh, and grates :
Yet life's a semblance, not a truth :
Time binds an hourly changing mask
On souls in changeless light that bask—
Younger we grow when near the gates
Of everlasting youth !

A SONG OF AGE

A SONG OF AGE

I

WHO mourns? Flow on, delicious breeze!
Who mourns though youth and strength
go by?
Fresh leaves invest the vernal trees,
Fresh airs will drown my latest sigh:
This frame is but a part outworn
Of earth's great whole that lifts more high
A tempest-freshened brow each morn
To meet pure beams and azure sky.

II

Thou world-renewing breath, sweep on,
And waft earth's sweetness o'er the wave!
That earth will circle round the sun
When God takes back the life He gave!
To each his turn! Even now I feel
The feet of children press my grave,
And one deep whisper o'er it steal—
"The soul is His who died to save."

GENIUS AND SANCTITY

"How high he soars!" Few say it when
the flight
Is highest. Saints escape the vulgar sight.

DEATH

Why shrink from death? In ancient days,
we know,
The slave was raised to freedom by a blow:
Man's prison-house, not man, the hand of
death lays low.

THE TRUE HARP

SOUL of the bard! stand up, like thy harp's
majestical pillar!
Heart of the bard, like its arch in rever-
ence bow thee and bend!
Mind of the bard, like its strings be mani-
fold, changeful, responsive:
This is the harp God smites, the harp,
man's master and friend!

SONG

SONG

WHEN I was young, I said to sorrow,
"Come, and I will play with thee":
He is near me now all day,
And at night returns to say,
"I will come again to-morrow,
I will come and stay with thee."

Through the woods we walk together ;
His soft footsteps rustle nigh me ;
To shield an unregarded head
He hath built a winter shed ;
And all night long in rainy weather
I hear his gentle breathings by me.

SONG

SONG

WHILE autumn flashed from woods of gold
Her challenge to the setting sun,
And storm-clouds, breaking, seaward rolled
O'er brightening waves, their passion done,
The linnets on a rain-washed beech
So thronged I saw not branch for bird :
My skill is scant in forest speech
But thus they sang or thus I heard.

'Twas all a dream—the wrong, the strife,
The scorn, the blow, the loss, the pain !
Immortal gladness, love and life
Alone are lords by right and reign :
The earth is tossed about as though
Young angels tossed a cowslip ball ;
But, rough or level, high or low,
What matter ? God is all in all.

ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS

“THOSE destined thoughts that haunt my
breast,
And throb, and heave, and swell,
Impatient of their painful rest,
And state invisible,
Those thoughts at last must meet the day,
And with me dwell, or on me prey :
On me, on me those thoughts must call,
And act, and live, and move abroad :
I am the mother of them all :
Be Thou their Father, God !”

Thus prayed I ; musing on that law
By which the children of the brain
Their linked generations draw
(A melancholy train)
From moods long past which feigned to die,
But in whose quickening ashes lie
Immortal seeds of pain or pleasure
No foot can crush, no will control,
No craft transmute, no prescience measure,
Dread harvests of the ripening soul !

FROM "LINES WRITTEN
UNDER DELPHI"

At Salem was the law. The holy land
Its orient terrace by the ocean reared
And thereon walked the Holy One, at cool
Of the world's morn ; there visible state He
kept :

At Salem was the law on stone inscribed :
But over all the world, within man's heart
The unwritten law abode, from earliest time
Upon our being stamp'd, nor wholly lost :
Men saw it, loved it, praised—and disobeyed.
Therefore the conscience, whose applausive
voice

Their march triumphant should have led
with joy

To all perfection, from a desert pealed
The Baptist's note alone : "Repent, repent" ;
And men with song more flattering filled
their ears.

Yet still the undersong was holy ! long—

LINES WRITTEN UNDER DELPHI

Though cast on days unblest, though sin-
defiled—
The mind accepted, yea, the heart revered,
That which the will lacked strength to fol-
low. Conscience,
Her crown monarchal first, her fillet next
Snatched from her sacred brows, a minstrel's
wreath
Assumed, and breathed in song her soul
abroad ;
On outcast duty's grave she with her tears
Dropt flowers funereal of surpassing beauty,
With reason walked, the right path indicated,
Though her imperative voice was heard no
more ;
Nor spake in vain. Man—fallen man was
great,
Remembering ancient greatness ; hymn and
tale
Held each some portion of dismembered
truth,
Severely sung by poets wise and brave.
They sang of justice, God's great attribute
With tragic buskin and a larger stride
Following the fated victim step by step :
They sang of love crowning the toils of life :
Of joy they sang ; for joy, that gift divine,
Primal and winged creature, with full breath
Through all the elastic limbs of Grecian
fable
Poured her redundant life, the noble tongue

LINES WRITTEN UNDER DELPHI

Strong as the brazen clang of ringing arms
With resonance of liquid sounds enriching
Sweet as the music-laughter of the Gods :
Of heavenly pity prophet-like they sang ;
And feeling after good though finding not,
Of Him that good not yet in flesh revealed
By ceaseless vigil's tears, and lifted palms,
And yearnings infinite and unrepressed,
A separate and authentic witness bore,
Thus was the end foreshown ; thus error's
cloud

Turned forth its silver lining on the night.
Thus too—for us at least a precious gift,
Dear for the love it grasped, by all it lacked
Sternly made bold vainglorious thoughts to
chide,—

Wisdom shone forth, but not for men unwise :
Her beams but taint the dead ; Men's guilt
and woe

She proved, and her own helplessness confessed.

Such were her two great functions. Woe to
those

Who live with art for faith, and bards for
priests !

These are supplanted : Sense their loftiest
hopes

Will sap : and fiends usurp their oracles ;

Olympian dreams, farewell ! your spell is past ;
I turn from you away, from Eros' self,

LINES WRITTEN UNDER DELPHI

From heavenly beauty on thy crystal brow
Uranian Venus, starred in gentlest light ;
From thee, Prometheus, chained on Caucasus,

Lo from thee, sad wanderer o'er the earth ;
From thee, great Hercules, the son of heaven,
And of humanity, held long in pain ;
Heroic among men, by labours tried,
Descending to the shades and leading thence
The lost ; while infant still, a serpent-slayer ;
In death a dread and mystic sacrifice :
From thee, more high than all, from thee,
Apollo !

Light of the world whose sacred beam, like
words,

Illustrated the forehead of the earth,
Supreme of harmonists, whose song flowed
forth

Pure from that light ; great slayer of the
Serpent

That mocked thy mother ; master of that
craft

Helpful to anguished flesh ; oracular :
Secretly speaking wisdom to the just ;
Openly to the lost from lips despised
Like thy Cassandra's flinging it to waste—
Phœbus Apollo ! here at thy chief shrine
From thee I turn ; and stern confession
make

That not the vilest weed yon ripple casts
Here at my feet, but holds a loftier gift

LINES WRITTEN UNDER DELPHI

Than all the Grecian legends! Let them
go—
Because the mind of man they lifted up,
But corruptible instincts left to grovel
On Nature's common plane, yea, and below
it ;
Because they slightly healed the people's
wound,
And sought in genial fancy, finite hopes,
Proportioned life and dialectic art,
A substitute for virtue ; and because
They gave for nothing that which faith
should earn,
Casting the pearls of Truth 'neath bestial
feet ;
Because they washed the outside of the cup,
And dropped a thin veil o'er the face of
Death ;
Because they neither brought man to his
God,
Nor let him feel his weakness—let them go !
Wisdom that raises not her sons is folly ;
Truth in its unity alone is Truth.

ODE

ODE

THE ASCENT OF THE APENNINES,

MAY, 1859

I

I MOVE through a land like a land of dream,
Where the things that are, and that shall be,
seem

Wov'n into one by a hand of air,
And the Good looks piercingly down through
the Fair !

No form material is here unmated ;

Here blows no bud, no scent can rise,

No song ring forth, unconsecrated

To meaning or model in Paradise !

Fallen, like man, is elsewhere man's earth ;

Human, at best, in her sadness and mirth ;

Or if she aspires after something greater,

Lifting her hands from her native dust,

In God she beholds but the Wise, the
Just ;

The Saviour she sees not in the Creator :

But here, like children of Saints who learn

The things above ere the things below,

Who choirs angelic in clouds discern

Ere the butterfly's wing from the moth's

they know,

ODE

Great Nature as ashes all beauty reckons
That claims not hereafter some happier
birth ;
She calls from the height to the depth ; she
beckons
From the nomad waste to a heavenly
hearth :
“ The curse is cancelled,” she cries ; “ thou
dreamer,
Earth felt the tread of her great Redeemer !”

II

Ye who ascend with reverent foot
The warm vale's rocky stairs,
Though lip be mute, in heart salute
With praises and with prayers
The noble hands, now dust, that reared
Long ages since on crag or sward
Those Stations that from their cells revered
Still preach the Saviour-Lord !
Ah ! unseductive here the breath
Of the vine-bud that blows in the breast of
morn ;
That orange bower, yon jasmine wreath,
Hide not the crown of thorn !
Here none can bless the spring, and
drink
Those waters from the dark that burst
Nor see the sponge and reed, and think
Of the Three Hours' unquenched thirst.

THE APENNINES

The Tender, the Beauteous receives its comment

From a truth transcendent, a life divine ;
And the coin flung loose of the passing moment
Is stamped with Eternity's sign !

III

Alas for those days of yore
When Nature lay vassal to pagan lore !
Baia—what was she ? A sorceress still
To brute transforming the human will !
Nor pine could whisper, nor breeze could move
But a breath infected ran o'er the blood
Like gales that whiten the aspen grove
Or gusts that darken the flood.
Beside blue ocean's level
The beauteous base ones * held their revel,
Dances on the sea-sand knitting,
With shouts the sleeping shepherd scaring,
Like Orcads o'er the hill-side flitting,
Like Mænads thyrsus-bearing.
The Siren sang from the moonlit bay,
The Siren sang from the redd'ning lawn,
Until in the crystal cup of day
Lay melted the pearl of dawn.
Unspiritual intelligence
Changed Nature's fane to a hall of sense,
That rings with the upstart spoiler's jest,
And the beakers clashed by the drunken guest!

* The "Ambubajæ."

ODE

IV

Hark to that convent bell !
False pagan world, farewell ;
 From cliff to cliff the challenge vaults re-
 bounded !
Echo, her wanderings done,
Heart-peace at last hath won,
 The rest of love on Faith not Fancy
 founded ;
" By the parched fountain let the pale flower
 die,"
She sings, " True love, true joy, triumphant
 reign on high ! "

V

The plains recede ; the olives dwindle ;
 I leave the chestnut slopes behind ;
The skirts of the billowy pine-woods
 kindle
 In the evening lights and the wind :
Not here we sigh for the Alpine glory
 Of peak primeval and death-pale snow ;
For the cold, grey mere, and the glacier
 hoary,
 Or blue caves that yawn below ;
The landscape here is mature and mellow ;
 Fruit-like, not flower-like : long hills em-
 browned ;
Ridges of purple and ledges of yellow
 From runnel to rock church-crowned :

THE APENNINES

'Tis a region of mystery, hushed and sainted:

Serene as the pictures of artists old

When Giotto the thoughts of his Dante
painted ;

The summit is reached ! Behold !

Like a sky condensed lies the lake far down ;

Its curves like the orbit of some fair
planet ;

A fire-wreath falls on the cliffs that frown

Above it, dark walls of granite ;

The hill-sides with homesteads and hamlets
glow ;

With wave-washed villages zoned below :

Down drops by the island's woody shores

The bannered barge with its gleam of oars.

No solitude here, no desert cheerless

Is needed pure thoughts or hearts to
guard ;

'Tis a populous solitude, festal, fearless,

For men of good-will prepared.

The hermit may hide in the wood, but o'er
it

Three times each day the chimes are
rolled :

The black crag woos the cloud, but before it

The procession winds on white-stoled.

Farewell, O Nature ! None meets thee
here

But his heart goes up to a happier sphere !

He sees, from the blossom of sense un-
folded

ODE

By the Paraclete's breath, its divine increase,
Rose-leaf on rose-leaf in sanctity moulded,
The flower of eternal Peace ;
The home and the realm of man's race above ;
The vision of Truth, and the kingdom of
love !

VI

There shall the features worn and wasted
Let fall the sullen mask of years :
There shall that fruit at last be tasted
Whose seed was sown in tears :
There shall that amaranth bloom for ever
Whose blighted blossom drooped erewhile
In this dim valley of exile,
And by the Babylonian river.
The loved and lost once more shall meet us ;
Delights that never were ours shall greet us ;
Delights for the love of the cross foregone
Fullfaced salute us, ashamed of none.
Heroes unnamed the storm that weathered
There shall sceptred stand and crowned ;
Apostles the wildered flocks that gathered
Sit, throned with nations round.
There, heavenly sweets from the earthly bitter
Shall rise like odour from herbs down-trod ;
There, tears of the past like gems shall glitter
On trees that gladden the mount of God.
The deeds of the righteous, on earth despised,
By the lightning of God immortalised

THE APENNINES

Shall crown like statues the walls sublime
Of all the illuminate, mystic city,
Memorial emblems that conquer Time,
Yet tell his tale. That pity
Which gave the lost one strength to speak,
That love in guise angelic stooping
O'er the grey old head, or the furrowed cheek,
Or the neck depressed or drooping,
Shall live for aye, at a flash transferred
From the wastes of earth to the courts of the
Word ;
The thoughts of the just, their frustrate
schemes,
Shall lack not a place in the wondrous
session ; [dreams,
The prayers of the saints, their griefs, their
Shall be manifest there in vision ;
For they live in the Mind Divine, their mould,
That Mind Divine the unclouded mirror
Wherein the glorified spirits behold
All worlds, undimmed by error.

VII

Fling fire on the earth, O God,
Consuming all things base !
Fling fire upon man, his soul and his blood,
The fire of Thy love and grace :
That his heart once more to its natal place
Like a bondsman freed may rise,
Ascending for ever before Thy face
From the altar of sacrifice !

ODE

And thou, Love's comrade, Hope,
That yield'st to wisdom strength, to virtue
scope,
That giv'st to man and nation
The on-rushing plumes of spiritual aspiration.
Van-courier of the ages, faith's swift guide,
That still the attained foregoest for the de-
sired ;
On, seraph, on, through night and tempest
winging !
On heavenwards, on, across the void, vast
hollow !
And be it ours, to thy wide skirts close
clinging
Blindly, like babes, thy conquering flight
to follow :
What though the storm of time roar back
beside us ?
Though this world mock or chide us
We shall not faint or fail until at last
The eternal shore is reached, all peril past !

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

[Copernicus died at Fraemberg, a small city at the mouth of the Vistula, A.D. 1543, and, as has been said, though the fact is not certain, the day after he received the first printed copy of that great work, dedicated to Pope Paul III, which embodied his astronomical discoveries, and substituted the Copernican for the Ptolemaic system of the universe. That work he had withheld from publication for thirty-six years, fearing lest the conclusions he had arrived at might possibly prove unsound scientifically, and, *in that case*, till confuted, be dangerous to faith. These misgivings he had discarded on re-examining the grounds of his philosophy.]

HAIL, silent, chaste, and ever sacred stars !
Ye bind my life in one ! I well remember
When first your glory pierced my youthful
heart :
'Twas Christmas Eve near midnight. From
a boat
I watched you long ; then, rowing, faced the
deep :
Above the storm-loved cliff of Elsinore
Sworded Orion higher and higher rose
With brightening belt. The city clocks
struck twelve :
Straight from the countless towers rang out
their chimes

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

Hailing the Babe new-born. Along the sea
Vibration waved ; and in its depths the stars
Danced as they flashed answering that raptu-
rous hymn

“Glory to God on high and peace on earth.”
I shall not long behold them, saith my leech :
He errs : I suffer little.

On my bed
Yon lies my tome—one man’s bequest to
men.

Is the gift good? From youth to age I toiled
A gleaner in the starry harvest field :
Lo, there one gathered sheaf—
I think I laboured with a stainless aim
If not a single aim. In ancient times
Pythagoras had gleams of this high lore :
Let coming ages stamp his name upon it ;
I count it his, not mine.

My earlier book
In substance was as this. But thus I mused ;
Christ’s simple ones may take offence and
cry

“Tis written, ‘God hath made the earth so
strong

That it cannot be moved ’ ; science avers
It moves around the sun.” Such questioner
Deserves all reverence. Faith is more than
science

But ’twixt the interpretation and the text
Lies space world-wide. That text meant this
—no more—

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

So solid is the earth concussion none,
Though mountain fell, can move it. Here is
naught

Of motion round the sun. Solidity
To such advance were needed not a bar :
Far flies the pebble forward flung; the flower
Drops at the flinger's foot.

Again I mused ;
The truth of Nature with the truth revealed
Accords perforce ; not so the illusive gloss
By Nature's scholiasts forced on Nature's
page :

That gloss of Ptolemy's made great Nature
lie

A thousand years, and more. Through count-
less errors

Thus only, science feels her way to truth.

May I not err like Ptolemy ? Distrustful

I hid my book for thirty years and six

Cross-questioning with fresh inquest patient
skies,

And found there nothing that arraigned my
lore,

Much that confirmed it. From the Minster
tower

Canon that time at Warnia though unworthy,

I made me charts of angle, sine and arc :

Those vigils left my feet so numbed at morn

They scarce could find the altar-step, my
hands

Scarce lift the chalice ! Day by day I prayed

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

With adjuration added, "If, my God,
Thou seest my pride suborn my faculties
Place me, a witless one, among those witless
That beg beneath church porches." Like-
wise I sued

The poor beside whose bed I ministered—
For their sake I had learned the healing
craft—

To fence me with their prayers.

Discovered truths
I blabbed not to the many but the wise,
Such men as raised our stateliest fanes. In
these

I found amazement less than I presaged :
There seemed a leaning in the midst of men
As when a leaning cornfield shows the wind
To such results as in Bologna's schools
Made way when there I dwelt. I note this
day

The ecclesiastics of the higher sort
Are with me more than those whose lore is
Nature ;

These hate the foot that spurns prescription's
fence ;

Not so my friend the bishop of old Kulm ;
He cries, "Go forward !" Thirty years ago
Milan's famed painter—he of the "Last
Supper"—

Whispered me thus, "The earth goes round
the sun."

There are whose guess is prophecy.

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

This night

I make election : twofold choice is mine ;
The first, to hurl this book on yonder sea ;
The last, to fling it on a flood more vast
And fluctuating more, the mind of man,
Crying, " Fare forth and take what God shall
send ! "

One doubt alone remains ; no text it
touches

But dangers from within. In days gone by
I saw a youth beside a casement stand
The sea not distant and a heaven all stars :
Christ's Advent was our theme. He cried,
" Look forth !

Yon skies confute the old faith ! When earth
was young

Wistful as lovers, credulous as children,
Men deemed that earth the centre of the
world

The stars its lackeys and its torch-bearers.
Such science is foredoomed : mankind will
learn

This sphere is not God's ocean but one
drop

Showered from its spray. Came God from
heaven for that ?

Speak no more words ! "

That was a tragedy !

A mood may pass ; yet moods have murdered
souls :

It proved not thus with him.

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

I looked again :
That face was as an angel's : from his brow
The cloud had passed. Reverent, I spake
no word :
It may be that my silence helped him best :
Later, albeit at times such moods recurred,
That man was helpful to a nation's soul :
In death he held the faith.

This earth too small
For Love Divine ! Is God not infinite ?
If so, His Love is infinite. Too small !
One famished babe meets pity oft from man
More than an army slain ! Too small for
Love !

Was earth too small to be by God created ?
Why then too small to be redeemed ?

The sense
Sees greatness only in the sensuous great-
ness :
Science in that sees little : faith sees naught :
The small, the vast, are tricks of earthly
vision :

To God the Omnipresent All-in-Each,
Nothing is small, is far.

More late I knew
A hoary man dim-eyed, with restless hands,
A zealot barbed with gibe and scoff still
launched
At priests, and kings, and holy womanhood :
One night descending from my tower he
spake ;

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

“ A God, and God incarnate but for man,
That reasoning beast ; and all yon glittering
orbs

In cold obstruction left ! ”

Diverse those twain !

That youth, though dazzled by the starry
vastness

And thus despising earth, had awe for God :
That grey-haired fool believed in matter only.

Compassion for those starry races robbed
By earth, like Esau, of their birthright just
Is pretext. They that know not of a God

How know they that the stars have habitants ?
’Tis faith and hope that spread delighted
hands

To such belief ; no formal proof attests it.
Concede them peopled ; can the sophist
prove

Their habitants are fallen ? That too ad-
mitted

Who told him that redeeming foot divine
Ne’er trod those spheres ? That fresh as-
sumption granted

What then ? Is not the universe a whole ?
Doth not the sunbeam herald from the sun
Gladden the violet’s bosom ? Moons uplift
The tides : remotest stars lead home the
lost :

Judæa was one country, one alone :
Not less Who died there died for all. The
Cross

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

Brought help to vanished nations : Time
 opposed
No bar to Love : why then should Space op-
 pose one ?
We know not what Time is nor what is Space ;
Why dream that bonds like theirs constrain
 the unbounded ?
If earth be small, likelier it seems that love
Compassionate most and condescending most
To sorrow's nadir depths, should choose that
 earth
For Love's chief triumph, missioning thence
 her gift
Even to the utmost zenith !
 To the soul
Far more than to the intellect of man
I deemed the gift vouchsafed when on me
 first
This new-born science dawned. I said,
 " Long since
We call God infinite : what means that
 term ?
A boy since childhood walled in one small
 field
Could answer nothing. He who looks on
 skies
Ablaze with stars, not handmaids poor of
 earth
But known for worlds of measureless bulk
 and swiftness,
Has mounted to another grade of spirit,

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

Proceeded man. The stars do this for man ;
They make infinitude imaginable :
God, by our instincts felt as infinite,
When known becomes such to our total
being,
Mind, spirit, heart and soul. The greater
theist
Should make the greater Christian. Yet, 'tis
true
Best gifts may come too soon.

No marvel this :
The earth was shaped for myriad forms of
greatness
As freedom, genius, beauty, science, art,
Some extant, some to be : such forms of
greatness
Are, through God's will, greatness conditional :
Where Christ is greatest these are great ;
elsewhere
Great only to betray. Sweetly and sagely
In order grave the Maker of all worlds
Still modulates the rhythm of human pro-
gress ;
His angels on whose song the seasons float
Keep measured cadence : all good things
keep time
Lest Good should strangle Better. Aristotle
Aspired like me to base on fact and proof
Nature's philosophy. Fate said him nay :
That fate was kindness hidden—
The natural science of great Aristotle

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

Died young : his logic lived and helped the
Church

To map her Christian science.

Ancient thought

And Christian faith, opposed in most beside
Held man in reverence, each. Much came
of that :

Matter dethroned, a place remained for
spirit :

Old Grecian song called man creation's
Lord ;

The Christian creed named him his Maker's
image ;

One was a humble reverence ; one a proud ;
Science that day perchance had made men
prouder ;

The Ptolemaic scheme had place and use
Till Christian faith conquering the earth had
crowned it :

The arch complete its centering is removed :
That faith which franchised first the soul of
man

Franchises next his mind.

Another knowledge

Man's appanage now, was snatched awhile
from men,

The lore of antique ages said or sung :
It rolled, a river through the Athenian vales ;
It sank as though by miracle in earth ;
A fount unsealed by hand divine, it leaps
Once more against the sun.

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

That strange new birth
Had place when I first trod Italian soil :
Men spake of bards to Dante's self unknown,
To Francis, Bernard, Dominic, Aquinas :
Great Albert knew them not ! The oracles
Of lying gods were dumb : but dumb not less
The sage Greek poets, annalists, orators,
For God had uttered voice, and leaned from
 heaven
Waiting the earth's response. The air was
 mute,
Mute, for the Saviour God had breathed it
 late,
Left it His latest sigh. The ages passed :
Alone were Apostolic voices heard ;
Then Fathers of the Church ; the Schoolmen
 last.
Clamour had ceased : the " Credo " for that
 cause
Was plainlier heard. The winds and waves
 had fallen ;
And there was a great calm—stillness of
 spirit
At heart of storm extern. At last God's
 truth
Had built o'er earth the kingdom of God's
 peace :
The penance time was passed : Greece spake
 once more :
What was that speech but prophecy fulfilled,
" The heathen shall become thy heritage,

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

The utmost parts of the earth be thy possession " ?

Cephisus and Ilyssus flow again :

Grey wastes with roses flame. Two epochs
blend ;

Shall not God's angels reap two harvest fields
Severing the wheat from tares ?

Severance is needful ;

Yea, needfuller yet will prove as ages pass.

The nobler songs of Greece divulged in
verse

Such truths as Nature had retained though
fallen,

Man's heart had prized. Aye, but with these
there mixed

Music debasing. Christendom this day

Confronts two gifts and trials likewise twain :
She must become the mother of great na-
tions ;

Each nation with the years will *breed* its book,
Its Bible uninspired. But if these books
Should prove but sorcerers' juggling wares,
these prophets

Stand up false prophets and their word a lie,
A voice from those two books of Greece and
Rome

Will sound their sentence, crying, " In the
night

We sang sweet songs the auguries of dawn ;
We sang the Mother-land, the household
loves,

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

The all-reverend eld, the virgin sanctitude,
The stranger's right, the altar reared to pity;
Ye, 'mid the noontide glories turned to
black,

Outshamed our worst with worse."

Should that voice peal
Woe to the nations which have sinned that
sin !

Truth's golden bowl will at the cistern break,
Song's daughters be brought low.

For these two gifts,
The science new, the old lore revived, the
time

Seems opportune alike. The earth finds
rest :

That Rome which warred on Christ is judged;
has vanished ;

Those direful heresies of three centuries
more,

The hordes barbaric, and barbaric thrice
Those Christian emperors vexing still Christ's
Church—

The Anti-popes are gone, not less : the Im-
postor

Scowls at the west in vain. Yet who can
tell

If in some age remote or near a cloud
Blacker than aught that shook the olden
world

May rush not from clear skies? That hour
upon us

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

" *Quieta non movere* " may become
Wisdom's sum total ; to repress, not spur
Progressive thought the hour's necessity ;
Against their will the truthfulest spirits may
cry,

" Better to wait than launch the bark of
knowledge

There when the breakers roar ! "

The time is fit :

Work, and in hope, though sin that hope
may cheat ;

Work, knowing this, that when God's lesser
gifts

Are mocked by mortals, God into that urn
Which stands for aye gift-laden by His
throne

Thrusts deeper yet His hand and upward
draws

His last—then chief—of mercies—Retribu-
tion.

Should man abusing use this knowledge vast
Not for relieving of God's suffering poor
But doubling of their burthens ; not for peace
But keener sharpening of war's battle-axe
And fleshlier solace of the idle and rich,
God will to such redouble pain for sin.

Such lot may lie before us. This is sure
That, as colossal sanctity walks oft

In humblest vales, not less a pigmy race
May strut on mountains. If from heights of
science

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

Men should look forth o'er worlds on worlds
unguessed

And find therein no witness to their God,
Naught but man's image chaunting hymns to
man

"Great is thy wisdom, man, and strong thy
hand,"

God will repay the madness of that boast
With madness guilty less, a brain imbecile.
Races there live, once sage and brave, that
now

Know not to light a fire! If impious men
Press round Truth's gate with intellect's
fleshlier lust—

For what is godless intellect but fleshly?
Sudden a glacial wind shall issue forth—
And strike those vile ones blind!

Should that day come

Let no man cease from hope. Intensest ill
Breeds good intensest. For the sons of God
That knowledge won by bad men will sur-
vive.

If fleets one day should pass the onrushing
storm

That Cross which lights their prow will reach
but sooner

The lands that sit in night. If Empires new
Wage war on Faith, each drop of martyr
blood

Will sow once more Faith's harvest. [spirits
Raised from a child-like to an angel pureness

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

Will walk in Chastity's sublimer flame,
Households become as convents grave and
 high ;
God's earthquake shake men to their fitting
 places
True men and false, the sons of light and
 night
No more as now confused. God's Church
 will make,
Since, though she errs not, yet her best may err,
For sins of good men dead due expiation,
Then for her second triumph claim as site
A planet's, not an empire's, girth. True
 kings
Will fence their thrones with freemen, not
 with serfs ;
True priests by serving rule. The Tree of
 Life
First made our spirits food, that Tree which
 slew us
Will prove her sister. Knowledge then will
 clasp
Supremacy o'er matter, earth's fruition
Not by the facile plucking of a fruit
But by the valorous exercise austere
Of faculties, God's gift.
 " Lift up your heads,
Ye everlasting gates," the Psalmist sang,
 " So shall the King of Glory enter in."
Lives there who doubts that when the starry
 gates

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS,

Lift up their heads like minster porches vast
At feasts before a marvelling nation's eyes,
And show, beyond, the universe of God—
Lives there who doubts that, entering there,
 man's mind

Must see before it far a God who enters
Flashing from star to star? Lives there who
 doubts

That those new heavens beyond all hope distant
 tent

Must sound their Maker's praise? Religion's
 self

That day shall wear an ampler crown. All
 Truths

Now constellated in the Church's creed
Yet dim this day because man's mind is dim,
Perforce dilating as man's mind dilates
O'er us must hang, a new Theology,
Our own, yet nobler even as midnight
 heavens

Through crystal ether kenned more sharply
 shine

Than when mist veiled the stars! Let others
 doubt—

My choice is made.

 The stars! Once more they greet me!
Thanks to the wind that blows yon casement
 back!

'Tis cold: but vigils old have taught me
 patience.

Is this the last time, O ye stars? Not so;

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

'Tis not the death-chill yet. Those northern
 heavens
Yield me once more that Northern Sign long
 loved,
That northern sea, its glass, though many a
 star
Faints now in broader beams. Yon winter
 moon
Has changed this cell thick-walled and oft-
 times dim
Into a silver tent. O light, light, light,
How great thou art! Thou only, free of
 space,
Bindest the universe of God in one :
Matter, methinks, in thee is turned to spirit :
What if our bodies, death-subdued, shall rise
All light—compact of light !
 I had forgotten
Good Cardinal Schomberg's missive : here it
 lies :
I read it three weeks past. "The Holy
 Father
Wills that your labours stand divulged to
 man ;
Wills likewise that his name should grace
 your tome
As dedicate to him." I read in haste :
That such high grace should 'scape my me-
 memory thus
Argues, I think, some failure of my powers.
So be it ! Their task is wrought.

THE DEATH OF COPERNICUS

The tide descends :
The caves send forth anew those hoarse sea-
thunders
Lulled when full flood satiates their echoing
roofs :
They tell me this, that God, their God, hath
spoken
And the great deep obeys. That deep forsakes
The happy coasts where fishers spread their
nets,
The fair green slopes with snowy flocks be-
spread,
The hamlets red each morn with cloaks of
girls
And loud with shouting children. Forth he
fares
To solitudes of ocean waste and wide
Cheered by that light he loves. I too obey :
I too am called to face the Infinite,
Leaving familiar things and faces dear
Of friends and tomes forth leaning from yon
wall :
Me too the Uncreated Light shall greet
When cleansed to bear it. O, how sweet
was life !
How sweeter must have proved had I been
worthy—
Grant me Thy Beatific Vision, Lord :
Then shall these eyes star-wearied see and
live !













